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WORKERS' EDUCATION  
IN  
ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES



# WORKERS' EDUCATION

IN

ENGLAND & THE UNITED STATES

BY

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God said: "I am tired of kings,  
I suffer them no more,  
Up to my ear the morning brings  
The outrage of the poor.

I will have never a noble,  
No lineage counted great,  
Fishers, choppers and ploughmen  
Shall constitute a state"



## PREFACE

IT is now five years since the first paragraphs of this book were written. The task seemed an easy one then. Labour Colleges were new and few. Their objectives were well defined, their future clearly indicated in glowing editorials. The best part of it all to a modern in a hurry to examine, describe and pass on to something else, was the fact that Workers' Education seemed to have burst fully grown upon a waiting world, uncomplicated by a bothersome period of youth and delightfully free of educational antecedents, difficult to trace and to value. It was not until an effort was made to press the study beyond contemporary manifestations of working-class demand for education that real obstacles were encountered.

Of course, it is hardly fitting for a research worker to complain of poverty of material. His job is to find it anyhow. Hoping, however, that a word to those who have lived and worked in the labour movement may be sufficient, the author would like to mourn the absence of working-class biography. By whom could richer and more significant human records have been kept? What lives have been more dramatic than those of the men who have led and followed the fortunes of trade-unionism? But cave-men who carved their annals in solid rock have told us more about themselves than generations of silent workers. Labour and labour leaders have a certain biographical responsibility to the future. The English have begun to realize it. Perhaps Americans will soon.

In the absence of such documentary evidence as only the workers themselves could have supplied, recourse

has been taken to other sources where the difficulty of separating fact from conjecture has been great. This serious embarrassment to accurate interpretation of labour's educational development has been increased by the fact that with every crystallization of the labour movement in the nineteenth century, the educational need perceived by those actually involved has altered. In the beginning the ability to read and write seemed to the poor to be sufficient. To-day, a mental grasp of complex economic and political principles must be combined with the ability to meet and deal with the keenest minds in government and industry.

The following pages will endeavour to show that with every change on the economic or political horizon, the educational motives and methods of the working class have changed. The only constant among many variables has been working-class demand for knowledge and a certain tendency on its part, first, to trust education only when administered by itself, second, to frame the content of education toward ultimate working-class control of government and industry.

In order to obtain an idea of the two competing forces in society operating on the one hand to exclude the workers from education, and on the other, to give them access to all the treasures of learning, an effort has been made to compare the educational motives of different classes. The discussion will accordingly follow two threads, the first of which will be a simple enumeration in chronological sequence of the educational enterprises founded for or by adult working men ; the second, an interpretation of the motives animating founders.

For the purpose of visualizing the problem, the history and interpretation of Workers' Education may be regarded, at least in England, as a pyramid of three time levels. During the first the workers interested in education were poor, illiterate and voiceless both economically and politically ; at the next, they were

skilled artisans less illiterate and more politically conscious; at the last, they had become organized working men, with an elementary education, the political franchise, and strong trade union affiliations.

At the first level, prior to 1830, the initiative in educating the adult poor in England was assumed by the ruling classes under the leadership of the Established Church, the Methodists, and certain charitable organizations. The motive of each group was determined by its peculiar interest either in maintaining the ignorance or increasing the literacy of the poor.

At the second level, between 1830 and 1900, the initiative shifted from worker to religionist, from religionist to philanthropist. The objective of education so clearly political under the Chartists, grew less defined with each new effort. Finally, under the Christian Socialists and in Toynbee Hall, economic and political motives were merged with diffused æsthetic and humanitarian impulses.

After 1900 the initiative was assumed by organized labour. The educational objective of the working class then became control over the political and economic aspects of working-class existence. Its method was educational enterprise administered by trade union organization.

In the United States, although the same general periods of development may be observed, the earlier acquisition of the franchise and the public school diminished the interest of labour in education for purely working-class purposes. It was not until after the disappearance of free land and the appearance of large numbers of foreign born workers, that American labour realized that the American labourer needed special and peculiar training for his function in the labour movement.

The period covered by the discussion will be the nineteenth century, not because it is the only one during which a subject class has endeavoured to

improve its position by education, but because it is the only one during which the poor as a class, the workers as an occupational group, have adopted uniformity of purpose and tactic.

The English-speaking nations have been chosen for study somewhat arbitrarily. Nevertheless, there are several reasons for so centring discussion. In the first place, material concerning the movement for Workers' Education on the Continent has been until recently inaccessible. Secondly, comparisons between the two English-speaking nations can be made with more precision, than between either one of them and the Continent. For the industrial revolution in Great Britain and in the United States antedated the extensive use of machinery on the Continent by half or three-quarters of a century; illiteracy, furthermore, has always been more unusual and education more common in England and in the United States than elsewhere; finally, democratic institutions in both countries have provided relative freedom from external and internal strife and, by reducing the tactic of the conflict between classes to that dictated by economic rather than political or nationalistic considerations, have simplified discussion.

With the foregoing difficulties and limitations of the subject in mind, the reader is urged to regard generalizations as suggestive rather than final and to be content with trends rather than conclusions.

In the course of writing these pages I have become a debtor to many friends. My mother helped to make the task of arranging a bibliography less monotonous; my father has read proof and lent moral support. Dr. Jessica B. Peixotto of the Department of Economics in the University of California followed the manuscript in the tedious processes of its development; and Mr. Frederick J. Teggart, of the Department of Social Institutions, proposed standards of historical method and research in the social sciences, which, though

seldom attained, have made even unsuccessful effort seem worth while. Mr. Paul Scharrenberg, Secretary of the California State Federation of Labour and a member of the Advisory Committee of the W.E.B., has read the book more than once. His assistance and criticism, favourable and unfavourable, has been the kind that only exceptional and long service in the labour movement makes possible. Two friends, Caroline Schleef and Marjory Atsatt have been inexhaustible sources of courage and enthusiasm as well as sensitive and discerning counsellors. What ever is of value in the book is due to such criticism. Its inadequacies and imperfections are my own.

M. T. H.

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ENGLAND



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

“Nature endeavours to make the bodies of freedmen and slaves different . . . Instruction . . . is plainly powerless to turn the mass of men to nobility and goodness ”

ARISTOTLE.

AMONG other novelties, the twentieth century has presented the school and labour world with a new model in education. In the course of two decades, centres of instruction, called Trade Union Colleges, Labour Universities, or Workers' Educational Associations have been established in English, Continental, and American industrial centres. Crossing the boundaries of America and Western Europe they are also to be found in Australia, Russia, Japan, and South Africa.

The questions raised by these new ventures in the field of teaching are of course numberless. What is Workers' Education? Why have Trade Union Colleges and Labour Universities been established? What does the working-class hope to gain through them not already offered by public systems of instruction? How does Workers' Education differ in objective from adult or vocational training? What are the historical sources of the movement? These and a hundred other inquiries are being made by students of labour, education, and public affairs, reflecting interest, but also ignorance of the economic and political frictions which have always accompanied changes in the institution of education.

To state what Workers' Education is, is fairly easy. For the movement, initiated by working-men or groups in which working-men have exercised the controlling influence, proposes to give those engaged in industrial

callings the desire and ability to share in social control, to become masters of their own industrial fate. Many agencies for Workers' Education are directly controlled by national or local labour organizations. They parallel or form an organic part of the trade union structure. Attendance in the class-room is drawn wholly from among manual labourers or industrial workers.

To distinguish between this movement and others for adult education or vocational training is also easy. For since the working-class has two educational objectives, the purpose of the vocational instruction is fundamentally different from that of Workers' Education. As a man and a bread-winner, the worker seeks knowledge in order to enrich his leisure or improve his earning power. He may even plan to emerge ultimately from the constraints of working-class existence. This education has taken the form of general culture, trade-training, or both, and is frequently offered by the schools.

As a unit in a group effort for more complete participation in the common life, the working-man, however, has been frankly sectarian. He has sought information as a member of a social class, a voter or a trade union official. Such education has often included instruction in the cultural branches. But it has always included the study of economics, politics, and the technique of trade union administration. For a trade union has three functions for which officials and rank and file desire preparation. First, it is a business organization. Its officers are called upon to carry on the complicated work of selling labour to employers ; to obtain through organization and legislation an approach to equality of bargaining power. Filing systems and card catalogues must be installed. Correspondence must be carried on. Trade agreements must be drawn up, trends of industry followed, and the internal business organization of a union kept in smooth running order. Second, a trade union functions also as a fighting body. It undertakes strikes and boycotts. The strategy of

the industrial conflict is developed by its leaders. The trade union is finally a unit in the larger scheme of politics. Its officers, experts, and members desire not only to play a part in the regulation of local, state, and national affairs, but are themselves chosen by election. For union and interunion relationships are regulated according to the forms of political democracy.<sup>1</sup>

The content of instruction in agencies for Workers' Education is thus dictated not by love of knowledge for its own sake, though that may and often is present. Neither is it prescribed by the desire on the part of the working-class students to secure personal aggrandizement or vocational advancement.

Labour Colleges recognize the insignificance of the improvement to be obtained by workers in capitalistic society through promotion in the shop or withdrawal from the working-class. Consequently, working-men enrolled as students in the movement are committed to some programme of class action, for which special knowledge and a peculiar technique are necessary. In other words, Workers' Education is not a course in general for people in general. It is a discipline for a specific purpose. It concerns itself in teaching the social sciences to men and women who seek to use that knowledge for class, and possibly social, advancement.

The definition of Workers' Education and an interpretation of its function in the modern labour movement is easy. When, however, we approach the task of searching for historical origins, of detecting the labouring poor in the act, as it were, of demanding learning in past time, we have outlined a difficult and baffling programme. Sense of direction for a time is lost, and the would-be chronicler is forced to break a somewhat new trail over somewhat unexplored historical terrain. For the very subject of his interest, the man of the

<sup>1</sup> Kopald, Sylvia, *Rebellion in Labour Unions*, pp 40-42 (N.Y., Boni & Livenght, 1924) See also, Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp 35-40, 467-471 1924 edn



humbler classes, has been the least self-conscious of historic personages. He has accepted his fate in silence, or resisted it with no sense of his part in the drama of resistance. He has kept no record of his sojourn on the planet, and the records kept for him by occasional eye-witnesses lack the insight into the intellectual problems of his life which only experience can give.

It has been common among scholars to ascribe the evolution of many social institutions to antecedent economic circumstances. Alterations in the pattern of human behaviour have often been attributed to changes in the food supply, to conditions of tenure and distribution of land, to phenomena arising from changes in prices, to improvements in transportation, to increases in government control of industry and similar influences. There is said to be an economic basis for the family and an economic basis for religion. But education and labour have received less than their full measure of attention in this respect. The development of the institution of education has usually been ascribed to general social movements such as the Renaissance, Reformation, Humanitarianism or even to the persistence of some great educator. The labour movement on the other hand, at the mercy of hasty or partisan hands, has often been presented as devoid of interest in education ; a blind giant leading the blind.

This neglect of education as an economic phenomenon and of the labour movement as an educational one, arises in part from the human desire of the educated to think of themselves as the chief sources of intellectual advancement, in part from the occupational preconceptions of those who have written histories of the two movements. The characteristic treatment of education by educators has usually omitted labour except as a pupil compelled by authority to learn a lesson chosen by his teacher. Too often investigators of the subject have been, not historians, but teachers. Too often

they have been teachers, not of some one of the humanities, but of teaching. Preoccupied with the externals of education, the philosophy, methodology, and technique of the class-room, they have ignored the fundamental forces which have filled it with students. A teacher has seldom asked himself why he has anyone to teach. Similarly, the characteristic history of the working-class movement has been concerned with the legal or structural aspects of labour organization. Few economists have been interested in defining its cultural or spiritual purpose. There is a certain novelty in searching the past of the great uneducated for the sources of a movement for learning.

But this failure to see the working-man as an active agent in his own intellectual adventure has led to the acceptance of loose generalizations concerning the power of the poor to learn. According to the aristocratic tradition, for example, power and knowledge have always flowed together along human channels created by innate capacity. Those fit to lead, says the aristocrat, have led. Those able to learn, have learned. Although the correlation between economic disability and low mental attainment has been observed, its cause has remained unsought. It has been enough to assume that both poverty and ignorance are the result of personal inferiority or the act of God. It has even been said that the lower orders, far from seeking knowledge, have embarrassed the efforts of their betters to raise the general level of intelligence.

From whence, then, comes Workers' Education?

In order to arrive at a realistic conception of the origin of Workers' Education and the relation of the working-class to the extension of knowledge, it is necessary to surrender at once the idea that education has always been a free good, freely bestowed. The tendency of the teacher to treat the history of teaching as one of intellectual open-handedness is not sound. Educational exclusion has played fully as large a part

in history as educational expansion. No matter how generous and disinterested have been the educational ideals preached by philosophers, a close correlation has always existed between power and knowledge, ignorance and subjection. The masses, according to ancient and modern social theories, "were to be governed, to be manipulated, to be the source of supplies. They had no need for instruction but rather to become habituated to such coercive controls as should impress upon them, the power and worth of those who governed."<sup>1</sup>

The expansion or suppression of knowledge has been dictated by political or economic expediency. Educational policy has rested in the hands of governments or controlling classes. These have at times fostered learning; but their efforts have been directed to increasing the capacity of men for self-government; to training those already in authority to govern in such a way as to retain their authority.

This tendency was evident alike in antiquity and in modern European society. Plato's purpose in planning the education of guardians in the *Republic* was almost identical with that of Machiavelli in the *Prince*. Each considered the educational need of a ruling group or person, and drew up a plan of instruction suitable to that end. The questions answered and the problems solved were such as would occupy the minds, not of subjects, but of rulers. While Athens and Sparta offered education to freedmen, nine-tenths of the population was excluded from the privilege of learning as the result of servile political status.<sup>2</sup> While Rome heralded the establishment of municipal, state, and private schools as a victory for general education, the extension of knowledge rarely crossed occupational and income lines. Wages were low, prices were high. Attendance, dependent on the ability to pay fees, became automatically

<sup>1</sup> Jackson, G. L., *The Privilege of Education; a History of its Extension*, p. 3. (Boston, Badger, 1918)

<sup>2</sup> Jackson, *op cit*, p. 18

impossible.<sup>1</sup> In early England, although education was a state concern, it was never general. The only desire of Alfred the Great, the father of English education, was "that every youth . . . that is free born and has wealth enough be set to learn."<sup>2</sup> The medieval church extended education to bright boys in order that they might enter her service. But none save sons or younger brothers of gentlemen were admitted to cathedral schools. It was for "the ploughman's son to plough, the artificer's son to follow the trade of his father's vocation; . . . the gentlemen's sons are used to have a knowledge of government and the rule of the Commonwealth."<sup>3</sup> As late as the eighteenth century it was the policy of the Venetian rulers of Dalmatia to keep their slave subjects in ignorance, in order that they might be less able to assert themselves. Fearing that learning might create a wish for freedom, the spirit of despotism in government has always been indifferent or hostile to education.<sup>4</sup> Education, as a result, has usually been extended along class lines.

Had the existence of the institution of education been entirely dependent upon the good-will of the educated and the powerful, there would have been no education. But although those who were excluded by birth or income disability from the privilege of knowledge, concurred with their rulers in the opinion that learning was of value in the business of statesmanship, they disagreed, sometimes to the point of rebellion, with the assumption that it should be extended only to incumbent statesmen and their sons. There is evidence of a progressively wider distribution of knowledge purchased

<sup>1</sup> Graves, F. P., *A History of Education before the Middle Ages*, p 227 (N.Y., Macmillan, 1913) See also, Jackson, *op cit*, pp 22-25

<sup>2</sup> Montmorency, J. E. G. de, *State Intervention in English Education*, p 38 (Cambridge, University Press, 1902)

<sup>3</sup> Cutts, E. L., *Scenes and Character of the Middle Ages*, p. 204, quoted by Jackson, *op cit*, p 38

<sup>4</sup> Bryce, James, *Modern Democracies*, p. 70, note 1 (N.Y., Macmillan, 1921)

at the cost of continual strife. Those who have had something to lose by teaching their dependants the rudiments of learning have struggled to keep them ignorant. Those, on the other hand, who have had something to gain by making the effort to learn, have fought for education. The educational interests of one social group as against another have seldom coincided. Those who have had access to political or economic preferment by reason of greater educational attainment have been slow to weaken their position by increasing the number of those similarly qualified. Educational enterprise has usually been promoted or undertaken by subject classes seeking participation in the direction of their own political and economic affairs.

It must not be assumed from this, however, that it was the modern, nineteenth century factory employed working-class which took the first steps toward a wider dissemination of knowledge. Prior to the French Revolution the only successful opposition to the universal governing class policy of exclusion was offered by powerful religious or middle-class economic groups. The Roman Church ordinarily objected to any form of instruction which tended to increase the independence of communicants. It acquiesced in every kind of chicanery whereby endowments established for poor scholars were diverted to the uses of the rich. During times of conflict between Church and State, however, Rome sought to extend to every man that minimum of letters which would make him responsible to ecclesiastical authority rather than to the crown. Then when the crisis was over and learning had begun to spread, there was usually a reversion to the older policy of co-operation with the civil power to restrict education. Both Church and State preferred conforming illiteracy to insubordinate knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

The most consistent agitation for education came from the lesser orders during the feudal period, and

<sup>1</sup> Montmorency, *op. cit.*, pp 30-31, 35, 37, 66.

from the middle classes after the introduction of the money economy. In Medieval Europe the crown, church, and nobility were kept constantly on the alert against the intellectual offensive of those whose status lay between that of landowner and that of serf. Entrance to the priesthood freed vassals from feudal dues. It also diverted services usually enjoyed by their lords. Consequently, vassal fathers were punished for allowing vassal sons to attend school<sup>1</sup> and the land-owning classes took determined steps to dampen the educational enthusiasm of villeins or to degrade them to a lower status.<sup>2</sup> In 1391 after the Black Death, an unprecedented number of the lower orders began to study theology in England. The Commons accordingly petitioned Richard II, praying that "no neif or villein may send his children as heretofore to advance their condition by the clerical status."<sup>3</sup>

To the educational conclusion practised by governing groups against merchants and yeomen, merchants and yeomen added still more exclusiveness. Realizing the necessity of guarding within their own circle the newly-discovered secrets of trade and finance, and finding that fraternization with the sons of other classes jeopardized middle-class interests, they established their own grammar schools.<sup>4</sup> Here young commercial adventurers were taught trade Latin, arithmetic and other relatively new subjects leading to the occupations of accountancy, the secretariate, and diplomacy. These schools were not welcomed by the incumbent ruling classes, and incurred the disapproval of Thomas Hobbs<sup>5</sup> on the ground that the study of civil conflict in classical literature might lead to revolution against the English

<sup>1</sup> Jackson, *op cit*, p 39

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, H T and Fallows, J A, *English Educational Endowments*, p. 27 (London, Workers' Educational Association)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p 28, see also, Jackson, *op cit*, pp 39-40

<sup>4</sup> Watson, Fowler, *The Old Grammar Schools*, pp 9-101 (Cambridge, University Press, 1916)

<sup>5</sup> Montmorency, *op cit.*, p 128

monarch A similar<sup>1</sup> movement took place in France during the reign of Louis XIII when the middle classes crowded into the universities in order to enter the professions or in other ways use knowledge as a means of economic aggrandizement.

The working-class has been the last economic group to make a demand for education, such as would fit its members for participation in the common life. Advocates of the aristocratic explanation of educational development seize upon the fact of delayed initiative and attribute the intellectual backwardness of the poor to natural indifference and incapacity. In support of their argument, they cite the numerous provisions made by universities and higher schools to educate indigent students. The poor are said to have been so welcome in university communities that a uniform of cap and gown was devised to prevent discrimination between students in homespun and students in satin. The maintenance of a poor scholar at school was considered a good work. The Manchester free grammar school was founded in 1515, to lessen the "waste of pregnant wittis by the povertie of the common people."<sup>2</sup> Medieval educational endowments almost invariably specified that a certain number of poor students were to be taught free of charge.

But educational endowments did not educate the poor. In spite of the far-sightedness of these provisions, the accessibility of learning to the lower orders was always more a matter of programme than of practice. The administration of fellowships and funds was subject to fraud and subterfuge. In the Middle Ages, nineteen years was required to complete residence for degrees of law, medicine, and theology. As a result

<sup>1</sup> Peixotto, J B, *The French Revolution and Modern French Socialism*, p 89 (N Y, Crowell, 1909) See also, Thierry, Augustin J. H., *Essai sur L'Histoire de la Formation et des Progrès du Tiers-Etat*, pp 65-90 (Levy Frères, 1848)

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins and Fallows, *op cit*, p 13, note 11, p 11, note 1

'many men supported on charitable endowments as "poor and indigent" scholars were in reality clergymen and lawyers.<sup>1</sup> It was assumed for their benefit that when founders required fellows to be "poor and needy" they had reference to the students themselves and not to their fathers. Furthermore, trustees were open to the temptation of educating their own sons and the sons of influential persons free of cost. Although the 'founders' statutes of Eton and King's College required that scholarships were to be granted uninfluenced "by the prayers and requests of kings, queens, or prelates," no questions were asked concerning the pecuniary standing of candidates, and holders were often the sons of clergymen, solicitors and naval officers.<sup>2</sup>

A more probable explanation of the tardier development of educational initiative among the poor proceeds from the economic hindrances which embarrassed them at every turn. The lower classes remained ignorant not because they were indifferent or incapable. Poverty foiled their attempts at self-education. The poor man was seldom able to absent himself from toil long enough to learn his letters. As a member of a class he was too ill-informed to combine with his fellows and make his demands effective. The spirit of exclusion which the land-owning classes asserted toward ambitious villeins bound for the Church; the Church toward laymen seeking intellectual independence; the merchants toward outsiders looking to enjoy the profits of commercial enterprises, was in turn asserted by all toward the educational aspirations of the poor. The income disability of the working-class played into the hands of all who wished to perpetuate an intellectually stratified society. While other social groups were successfully demanding knowledge, the only thing the poor could manage was an occasional general protest against their

<sup>1</sup> Rait, R S, *Life in the Medieval Universities*, pp. 13, 77-8 (N Y., Putnam, 1912)

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins and Fallows, *op. cit*, pp 28-34, 44



rulers. Enmity under such circumstances was often exhibited toward members of the learned professions who found it convenient to act as ramparts to authority. The peasants in Wat Tyler's rebellion in the fourteenth century, for example, directed their hostility toward lawyers and clerks because it was through them that the legal claims of the lords were enforced.<sup>1</sup> But this revolt failed as did the Peasant War of 1552 in Germany, and later collective protests. The poor bore their burdens as individuals. Even the most intelligent among them were ignorant of the value and technique of organized action.

The working-class, however, did not always remain a passive spectator of the drama of intellectual enlightenment. With the opening of the nineteenth century, machine production was introduced. The doctrine of the natural rights of men, among which was included the right to education, captured the imagination of the masses. The poor achieved self-consciousness as the working-class. They began to appreciate the value of combination. Organized resistance, although conducted by unlettered men, resulted in some form of record keeping, either by themselves or their opponents. Throughout these records, supplementing demands for political and economic liberty, are found additional demands for learning. "An immense change had begun, not only among speculative minds, but also among the people themselves. . . . The leading characteristic of the eighteenth century, and the one which pre-eminently distinguished it from all that preceded, was a craving for knowledge on the part of those classes from whom knowledge had hitherto been shut off. It was in that great age that there were first established schools for the lower orders on the only day they had time to attend them, and newspapers on the only day they had time to read them. It was then that there were

<sup>1</sup> Cheney, E. P., *An Introduction to the Industrial and Social History of England*, p. 124 (N.Y., Macmillan, 1919)

first seen in our country, circulating libraries, and it was then, too, that the art of printing instead of being almost confined to London, began to be generally practised in the country towns.”<sup>1</sup>

Labour, in other words, taken to mean either all the subject classes of history which have toiled to provide comfort for succeeding generations of masters, or to mean merely the organized nineteenth century movement of the working-class, has always been interested in obtaining knowledge. No subject group has been more determined to effect its emancipation by education and its education by emancipation. No social class has provided better materials for the study of the economic origins of educational endeavour.

The first steps toward Workers' Education may be said to have been taken about 1780, the date of the organization of the first durable trade unions in England. The poor began then to become conscious of a common class history and destiny. Before that time elementary education, when it existed at all for the poor, had no aim beyond training for apprenticeship or circulating religious doctrine. Free education under the Church and philanthropy was pauper education. The question of State intervention in educational matters had never assumed practical importance. After that date, the enlargement of the objective of elementary education, the provision of free education untainted by charity, the assumption by the State of responsibility for the intellectual development of its cities began to be taken for granted. These reforms, the fruit of a great reaction, originated in the people themselves. Supported at first by a few men of the upper classes, countless associations of working-men embarked on a struggle for a rise in wages; attempted even to assert a part in directing the process of production and finally created a number of institutions destined to secure to the working-classes

<sup>1</sup> Buckle, Henry Thomas, *The History of Civilization in England*, pp 347-356. (London, Oxford University Press, 1919.)

an increasing share in the progress of culture in their time. The working-class in England, composed of people who had no representation and who cared very little about speculative theories, was thus able for a hundred years to secure continuous debate in the House of Commons concerning the purposes and methods of the extension of learning.

With this background in mind it might be inferred that the historical origin of Workers' Education could best be studied with education-as-a-whole versus the masses-as-a-whole under the microscope. Indeed, the boldness of such a project has its attraction. But after inspection of the problem, justifications appear for splitting up the subject into convenient and significant parts. From the point of view of method, the laboratory practice of analysing the part before drawing conclusions concerning the whole is as sound in social interpretation as in scientific observation. In the present instance, the larger problem would present formidable proportions. The world would be set as the stage and all past time the only limit to the dramatic action. Furthermore, the isolation of Workers' Education makes it possible to scrutinize the history of the extension of learning from the side of demand. For general education is, and long has been, compulsory. It is concerned with the training of children, who take little or no interest in the content and administration of their schooling. On them learning is imposed. When, however, an adult worker voluntarily sacrifices scant leisure to a class in a Trade Union College, his criticism of the educational system and his social philosophy are proclaimed. An analysis of the cause and nature of his demand throws a new light upon the economic origin of educational institutions and upon the intellectual goal of the working-class movement.

The psychological picture presented in a study of Workers' Education is not that of a group upon which education has been forced. It is that of a group which

has wanted education strongly enough to demand it and to fight for it. Having as its sole objective the economic and political emancipation of a social group, a study of Workers' Education establishes a modern connection between educational privation and economic authoritarianism. It suggests that subject class initiative is still necessary in the extension of learning. It suggests a similarity between the educational motives of modern labour and those of the church and middle class when those groups sought relief from the intellectual dictation of political superiors.

## CHAPTER II

### EDUCATION, THE POOR AND THE CHURCH

"It must never be forgotten that education is such a dangerous thing that it is very doubtful whether the invention of printing would have been tolerated if more than a few people had been able to read"

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

#### I

IN discussing the subject of charity schools, Bernard de Mandeville remarked that in order "to make the Society happy and the people easy under the meanest of circumstances, it is requisite that numbers of them be ignorant as well as poor. . . . For" said he, "the welfare of every state and kingdom requires that the knowledge of the working poor should be confined within the verge of their occupations and never extended beyond what relates to their calling. The more a shepherd, a plowman, or any other peasant knows of the world, and the things that are foreign to his labour or employment, the less fit he'll be to go through the fatigues and hardships of it with cheerfulness and content."<sup>1</sup>

This remark epitomized the opinion of the ruling class in England with respect to the education of the lower orders in the eighteenth century, and reflected, to a certain extent, the attitude of the poor themselves. For a knowledge of reading and writing has not always been necessary to subsistence. Indeed, prior to the industrial revolution, the ignorance of the masses not only failed to interfere with the smooth interaction of

<sup>1</sup> Mandeville, Bernard de, *The Fable of the Bees*, pp 256-257. (Edinburgh, W. Grey and W. Peter, 1775)

political and economic forces but also acted as a sort of lubricant for constantly recurring social frictions.

Formal education before the invention of machinery was not necessary because the lower classes found the matter of getting a living relatively simple. The worker inherited status, tools, and technique from his forebears. A young peasant tilled the same fields, with the same tools, at the same seasons as his father before him. Technology changed slowly. The labourer saw the nature and meaning of his industry. He also understood his functional relationship to other members of the village society. Economic, political and administrative affairs were centralized in the hands of a group of landowners to whom all other individuals were bound by ties of legal obligation or economic discretion. In exchange for service, usually agricultural, the worker received subsistence. Economic relationships were restricted to the dues he owed his master and the living his master owed him. The social fabric was a closely woven, intelligible whole. Work, worship, amusement found their roots in ancient usage. The absence of physical privation, the lack of sudden change invited mental inertia. Experience was the best and only teacher. "English industrial workers in those days lived . . . in retirement and seclusion, without mental activity and without fluctuation in their position in life. They could rarely read and could far more rarely write; went regularly to church, never talked politics, never conspired, never thought, delighted in physical exercise, listened with inherited reverence when the Bible was read, and were, in their unquestioning humility, exceedingly well disposed toward the superior class. But intellectually they were dead. . . . They were comfortable in their silent vegetation."<sup>1</sup>

What peculiar influence exercised at the beginning of the nineteenth century induced the owning and the

<sup>1</sup> Engel, Friedrich, *Conditions of the Working-Classes in England in 1844*, p. 4. (N. Y., J. W. Lovell, 1887)

governing class to abdicate their traditional authority in favour of an untried and suspected venture in education? What pricked the comfortable illiteracy of the poor to a feverish quest for knowledge, which in its very nature, made contented dependence intolerable?

After the industrial revolution methods of production were not only altered with unparalleled rapidity but ushered in a host of social irritations. With the invention of the spinning-jenny and steam-engine, change became the most constant quantity in life. For a time it wrenched every member of society and every social institution from accustomed moorings.

The location of factories near sources of power caused a redistribution of the population. The countryside was stripped of the most vigorous labourers and the towns inundated with a flood of people ignorant of the discipline and restraint of urban life. The rush to cotton centres between 1780 and 1790 was like the rush to the gold-fields in '49.<sup>1</sup> Had the migration been foreseen, administrative and psychological adjustments would have been difficult enough. As it was, the supply of dwellings gave out and old methods of maintaining order and administering justice broke down. Parish and county government designed to meet village needs and manned by the inelastic gentry could not adapt itself at once to the complex problems of city administration. "When we remember," said the Webbs, "that it was exactly in these new urban districts that the public business of the parish was becoming every day more complicated and difficult; that the mere number of paupers was becoming overwhelming; that new buildings by the hundred were springing up on all sides; that paving, cleansing, lighting and watching were all lacking; that the crowding together of tens of thousands of poverty-stricken persons was creating unspeakable nuisances;

<sup>1</sup> Podmore, Frank, *Robert Owen, a Biography*, pp 37-38 (London, Hutchison.)

we shall easily understand why, in one parish after another, the slight legal framework of the parish fell hopelessly asunder and the situation became incredibly bad.”<sup>1</sup>

For a time the gentry were able to maintain a safe distance from centres of dirt, disease and petty criminality. They avoided service as judges or allowed themselves to be supplanted by those of conspicuous incapacity.<sup>2</sup> But they could not remain for ever aloof. Poverty encroached upon health and pocket-book. It brought disease and unsavoury sights to the doors of vicarage and manor. The factory system spread its net and the comfortable balance of the well-to-do trembled before the evidence of their senses. The poor were being aroused to a sense of their wrongs by the writings of Paine and others, whom their betters considered interested and ambitious demagogues. For purposes of defence the gentry hurried to their most trusted advisers.

The first of these, the economists, recommended a judicious dose of education. Adam Smith, the most sympathetic and level-headed among his profession, confessed that the education of the lower orders presented certain non-utilitarian aspects, yet he advised those in power to try it. He regarded intellectual competence as an important prerequisite to industrial prosperity. His protest against the jealous restrictions of merchantilism was based upon the fundamental doctrine that trade was mutual service under “the obvious and simple system of natural liberty.” In the *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* he commended the education of the common people to the attention of the State because “in a commercial society their mental training is more important than that of people of rank and fortune.”

<sup>1</sup> Webb, B and S, *English Local Government from the Revolution to the Municipal Corporations Act, Parish and County*, p 48 (London, Longmans, 1906)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, *passim*



But the upper classes had a way of interpreting economic theory, particularly as it applied to the relation between labour and capital, according to congenial patterns. Opinion of the period seized upon the philosophy of natural liberty and ignored the idea of mutual service. A similar fate attended his recommendations concerning the education of the poor, and he rendered his advice still more unpalatable to a utilitarian generation by saying "that though the State was to derive no advantage from the instruction of the inferior ranks of people, it would still deserve its attention that they should not be altogether uninstructed"<sup>1</sup>

The well-to-do, who regarded the increase of destitution, crime and disorder as incontrovertible evidence of the natural depravity of the lower orders, were more attracted by the Malthusian argument for education, which advocated education of the poor in order to teach them to eliminate their kind.<sup>2</sup>

Poverty, Malthus said, was caused by the irresponsible fecundity of the poor. "It is not the duty of man simply to propagate his species but to propagate virtue and happiness, and if he has not a tolerable fair prospect of doing this, he is by no means called upon to leave descendants."<sup>3</sup> The fairest chance of returning the nation to its former state of equilibrium was to be found in hitting the cause of change, the increase in population. In order to convict the poor of their error, he advocated an education in which "frequent explanations of the real state of the lower classes—as

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 269.

<sup>2</sup> An educational society of the time urged the people to concern themselves with the education of the poor because "it involves our personal security. We are obliged upon innumerable occasions to entrust them with our prosperity . . . As they are enabled to rise in the scale of civilization, they will feel more repugnance to the degradation of Parish Relief, and the enormous sums extracted from the industrious part of the community will be saved" (A.E.C.P., 12)

<sup>3</sup> Malthus, T. R., *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, Vol. II, p. 210 (N.Y., Dutton, Everyman Edition.)

affected by the principle of population and their consequent dependence upon themselves for the chief part of their happiness or misery formed a large part.”<sup>1</sup> “Education,” he tactfully told worried opponents of the extension of knowledge, “is one of those advantages which not only all may share without interfering with each other, but the raising of one person may actually constitute the raising of others.”<sup>2</sup>

The Church, the second adviser of the ruling classes, was also in favour of instructing the poor. But its counsel was seriously divided. The religious forces of England were split into three major contending factions led by the clergy of the Established Church, John Wesley, and the Evangelical Preachers. Each of these recommended education for a different reason and each adopted a different programme of action dictated by what appeared to be the immediate conditions of denominational survival.

## II

The Established Church, of course, regarded the education of the poor with more apprehension than any of the other religious groups. The Tory mind depended upon the contentment of the lower orders under deprivation. It was feared that education would teach them to question their condition.<sup>3</sup> When, therefore, the pious gentry, frightened by the political unrest among the ignorant adult poor, appealed for advice, the clergy advocated not education but repressive measures. Societies for the Reformation of Manners, active after the Revolution of 1688, were revived and “all manner

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p 211.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p 214.

<sup>3</sup> In 1807, the first Education Bill was introduced by Whitbread into the House of Commons and thrown out by the House of Lords. In 1820, a second Education Bill introduced by Brougham met the same fate. (A E C, p 10)

of vice, profaneness—playing, on the Lord's Day, of dice, cards or any other game whatsoever, was punished severely." These organizations were supported by all the respectable inhabitants of communities. But their rulings were prompted by different motives. Queen Mary and Wilberforce, for instance, were concerned because the common people were defying God's law. Magistrates, manufacturers, and quiet folk generally wanted to stop the depredations on life and property. To the employers and principal inhabitants of each district the worst part of the evil seemed to be the waste of time and money by the poor, which checked production and increased the poor rate.<sup>1</sup> As a whole, the educated classes wanted merely to reclaim the lower orders to a life of regular and continuous work. Intellectual innovation with any other purpose was regarded by them with anxiety and fear.

Dissenting sects, on the other hand, moved by the spirit of the Reformation insisted upon the necessity of a general knowledge of reading and writing. They began their efforts with the children. Ragged schools were established for urchins in the streets. An act in 1597 provided for the maintenance and education of boys in hospitals or workhouses.<sup>2</sup> In the reign of Queen Anne there was an outburst of charitable activity which resulted in a large number of educational foundations.<sup>3</sup> In the seventeenth century dissenting evangelists such as Thomas Gouge, travelled up and down through the villages of Wales, inquiring "in each town how many were willing that their children should learn to read and write English and to repeat the catechism."<sup>4</sup> The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in 1698 began the same work in London

<sup>1</sup> Webb, B. and S., *The History of Liquor in England Principally from 1700 to 1830*, pp 147-148. (London, Longmans, 1903)

<sup>2</sup> Montmorency, *op cit*, p. 193, note 1

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p 190 In 1675 he had enrolled 1850 children

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p 199.

and Westminster.<sup>1</sup> In 1729, thirty-one years later, 1658 schools were in operation with an enrolment of 34,000 children.

### III

When John Wesley appeared on the scene, however, the results of the efforts of early dissenters which Joseph Addison referred to as the glory of the age<sup>2</sup> had "produced so slight an effect on the ignorance of the people that the opening of the nineteenth century presented to the eyes of the world a nation that was suffering from intellectual starvation."<sup>3</sup> Francis Place observed that charity schools had "taught the poor next to nothing and nothing likely to be useful to them."<sup>4</sup>

Wesley, himself, was a member of the governing and educated classes. His first sympathy lay naturally with the group into which he had been born. With them he shared a fastidious dislike of the rude and brutal pleasures of the town population. It is even possible that the Methodist emphasis upon the sinfulness of popular amusements may be traced to Wesley's attempt to curb in his followers what alienated him from his peers. But in spite of all he could do to interest the upper classes in his message, Methodism became a movement of the factory town poor.

The extreme poverty of the great revival audiences was remarked by contemporary observers and verified by the character of money offerings received. "Many thousands in the lower ranks of life were infected by this species of enthusiasm," says Smollett.<sup>5</sup> Walpole wrote with a sneer that Whitefield's "largest crop of proselytes

<sup>1</sup> In 1711 the *S P C K* issued a circular recommending the education of adults.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 191

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 203

<sup>5</sup> Smollett, T G, *The History of England from the Revolution of 1688 to the death of George II*, p. 90 (Philadelphia, McCartney & Downs, 1840.)

lay among servant-maids."<sup>1</sup> Employers feared the infection among their workers and threatened to discharge any who refused to join mobs of stone throwers. Farmers refused to employ labourers who attended Wesleyan meetings. Landlords expelled Methodists from cottages.<sup>2</sup> The sums collected at the meetings were often so large that "stewards found it somewhat difficult to carry the offerings from the communion table. Once they counted as many as ten thousand pieces of copper."<sup>3</sup>

The appeal of Methodism to the poor was largely the result of neglect on the part of the Established Church. The peasants from the English country-side who had flocked to the industrial towns found themselves in destitution and distress without priest or church. For in urban communities clergymen were often absentee directors of their own parishes. What few church buildings there were, were too small to accommodate the swollen number of communicants. A large proportion of the emigrating workers lay, therefore, almost wholly beyond the range of religious observance.<sup>4</sup> Wesley would gladly have led the poor back to their old altar, but the Church added to their dissatisfaction by refusing to open its pulpits to revival preachers. As a result, preaching services were conducted in the fields, streets, market-places and churchyards; once even on a platform erected for wrestlers at the race-course.<sup>5</sup> The size of open-air meetings was limited only by the carrying quality of the preacher's voice. It was a commonplace thing to preach to audiences of two, three or four and five thousand.<sup>6</sup> When Wesley was eighty-six years

<sup>1</sup> Walpole, H., *Memoirs of the Reign of George the Third*, Vol III, p 97 (London, Colburn, 1846)

<sup>2</sup> Lecky, W E H., *A History of England in the 18th Century*, Vol II, p 630. (N Y, Appleton, 1878)

<sup>3</sup> Hyde, A B, *Story of Methodism*, p. 70 (Greenfield, Massachusetts, 1887)

<sup>4</sup> Lecky, *op cit*, Vol II, p. 579

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, Vol II, p 627

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p 613.

old he delivered an address before 25,000 souls.<sup>1</sup> In defence of the open-air meeting one authority says: "It is hard to see how the masses could have been reached without it. For, supposing all the churches had been thrown open to them, it would have been impossible to crowd into them a tithe of the seething multitudes, and probably not a tithe of the tithe would ever have been persuaded to enter its doors."<sup>2</sup>

Yet the response awakened by Methodism cannot be ascribed wholly to the unchurched state of the poor, nor as Dr Johnson pointed out, "to the fact that the Established Clergy did not preach plain enough"; and that polished periods and glittering sentences flew over the heads of the common people.<sup>3</sup> Methodism brought the depressed factory population a doctrine which met their need. It gave back to the poor something which seemed to them to have been irretrievably forfeited with departure from the happy dependence of an agricultural economy. In a world in which only wretchedness was certain it filled them with a sense of security, if not in this world, at least in the next. Wesley did little by way of direct precept to mitigate the cruelties of poverty. In fact he preached poverty as a more or less necessary trial. But Wesley thought he faced a world altogether bad. So did the poor. He pointed to compensation after death. The poor were glad to find it anywhere. The prospect of a future reward encouraged them to face the world with independence.<sup>4</sup>

The heart of the Methodist movement lay in the Methodist Societies. They displayed an organization so superior to that of other dissenting sects that they soon became centres around which enemies of the

<sup>1</sup> Stephen, Leslie, *History of English Thought in the 18th Century*, Vol II, p 409, quoted from Tyerman, *Life of Wesley*, Vol I, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Overton, J. H., *The Evangelical Revival in the 18th Century*, p. 22. (N Y, Longmans, 1907)

<sup>3</sup> Boswell, James, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, Vol I, p 170 (London, Dent, 1920)

<sup>4</sup> Hammond, *The Town Labourer*, pp 282, 285.

English Church could rally.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it is evident that Wesley was by no means happy in the plan and personnel of administration which the desertion of his own kind forced him to adopt. He realized that survival under great odds depended upon the intellectual ability of his lieutenants. These were drawn from among the poor and credulous, the ignorant and dependent. Persecution and ridicule aimed at Wesley and Whitefield, turned on the unlettered and inelegant character of their following.<sup>2</sup> The order and regularity which characterized his sect was purchased, therefore, at the expense of double effort on his part. He was compelled not only to instruct the masses in the way of salvation, but to find and train leaders who could hold the Societies together during his enforced absences. Bearing in mind Wesley's temperamental bias in favour of authority centralized in himself, it is not too much to say that much of the method of Methodism was invented to make the administration of the societies easy for individuals who had had no experience either in managing large bodies of people or in handling large sums of money. He was forced not only to establish the usual Sunday and Charity Schools for Children, similar to those founded by other dissenting sects, but also Adult Schools, often conducted on Sunday where instruction was given to the rank and file of chapel membership and to Society leaders and officials.

#### IV

Wesley was assisted in his educational work by the Evangelicals. These Methodists of a bluer blood<sup>3</sup> were

<sup>1</sup> Buckle, *op cit*, pp 239-240

<sup>2</sup> Barr, J H, *Early Methodists under Persecution, passim* (N Y, Methodist Book Concern, 1916)

<sup>3</sup> Wardle, A C, *History of the Sunday School Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church*, p 10 (N.Y, Methodist Book Concern, 1918)

as firmly convinced of the efficacy of knowledge in the social and denominational crises as Wesley himself. But their methods were coloured by their social traditions. Although attracted by the emotional aspects of the new doctrine, they were unable to sever themselves from the ritualism of the Church of England. The ugliness of the Methodist service was repellant; the sterner side of its leader's gospel uncongenial. They refused to join the Methodist Societies, and evangelical duchesses were known to protest that it was "monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth." They accused Wesley of perpetually endeavouring "to level all ranks and do away with all distinctions."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, while Wesley and Whitefield stirred the masses, "fine ladies and gentlemen began to play at sympathy with the poor and oppressed."<sup>2</sup> They undertook a programme of social reform which combined the repressive measures of Societies for the Reformation of Manners with the sentimentality of the Wesleyans.<sup>3</sup>

The More sisters, Patty and Hannah, were typical among evangelical educators. Patty More is known only for her work as a teacher and the authorship of one volume, describing it.<sup>4</sup> With Hannah, she undertook the development of the Sunday School and Adult School side of the movement. She advanced into the coal-miners' village of Mendip much as a missionary approaches the heathen in equatorial Africa. Her testament was in her hand, and on her lips were maxims concerning the excellences of thrift and self-control.<sup>5</sup>

Hannah More, on the other hand, was one of the learned ladies of her period, a friend of Dr. Johnson, and a member of many literary circles. In order to

<sup>1</sup> Lecky, *op cit*, Vol II, p 671.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen, Vol II, p 443.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol II, p. 428.

<sup>4</sup> *Mendip Annals*.

<sup>5</sup> Raven, C E., *Christian Socialists*, 1848-1854, p. 10. (London, Macmillan, 1920)



counteract the "pernicious trash" which Thomas Paine and kindred spirits were issuing to the profligate multitudes,<sup>1</sup> she published a series of papers collected under the title of the *Cheap Repository Tracts*. These were so representative of the opinion of her time and group that the unprecedented circulation of two million copies was reached in one year.<sup>2</sup> Many thousand copies of the *Village Politics of Will Chip, A Country Carpenter* were purchased by the government for free distribution.<sup>3</sup>

Hannah More, of course, was deeply concerned in correcting the social derangements of the period, but she was swayed by class and pecuniary standards. She confused poverty with permanent deterioration. Her economic theory, compounded in equal parts of Malthusian pessimism, standardized piety, and governing class preconceptions, was simple. "Beautiful is the order of Society," she said, "when each, according to his place—pays willing honour to his superiors—when servants are prompt to obey their masters, and masters deal kindly with their servants;—when high, low, rich and poor—when landlord and tenant, master and workman, minister and people, instead of each proudly pushing himself into the chair of his superior, sit down each satisfied with his own place."<sup>4</sup> She was among those who were disturbed by the prevalence of French republican ideas among the labouring class. Early and late she laboured to rob them of their attractiveness to the British poor. The problem of education thus became to her one of determining what amount of schooling was compatible with the submissiveness of the worker. The curriculum was framed to convert

<sup>1</sup> More, Hannah, *Cheap Repository Tracts, Entertaining, Moral, Religious*, Vol I, p 6 (N Y, American Tract Society, 1855.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p 7

<sup>3</sup> Mathieson, William Law, *England in Transition 1789-1832, A Study of Movements*, p 57 (London, Longmans, 1920)

<sup>4</sup> More, Hannah, *op cit*, Vol IV, pp 135-136

the lower orders to the theological and economic dogmas of their superiors.

## V

Apart from experimental trade societies, the working poor were organized for the first time in Wesleyan Societies. Here they received a spiritual stimulus which has pervaded the British working-class movement ever since. Here they received their first experience as orators, administrators, and officials, and their first formal education. Methodism was therefore the incubating agent of the British labour movement.

Education was offered in Wesleyan Societies through Adult Schools and training systems arranged for lay-preachers, stewards, and other officers. The method of teaching and the curriculum in the Adult Schools was modelled upon the ancient practice of catechising in the Established Church. In as much as familiarity with the parts of Scripture supporting the Methodist doctrine was necessary to confirmation, and in as much as the ability to memorize served the purpose quite as well as the ability to read, teachers sometimes did not wait for proficiency in the latter.

"Adults have no time to lose,"<sup>1</sup> they said, "we endeavour, therefore, before they can read, to instruct them without delay in the first principles of Christianity." "We select a short portion of Scripture, comprising, in plain terms, the leading doctrines, and repeat them to the learners till they can retain them in their memory ; and which they repeat the next time we meet."<sup>2</sup> "The general business of instruction adopted in the male and female schools," said another observer, "was the reading of a portion of the Scriptures by the conductor, the scholars being afterward questioned as to the history or the precepts contained in the chapter ; this was followed

<sup>1</sup> In 1834 Sunday Schools were open five and a half hours on Sundays, two hours on week-day evenings. (Montmorency, *op. cit.*, p. 206)

<sup>2</sup> Wardle, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

by a monitor being appointed to every six or seven persons to repeat the lesson. The learners were all seated on forms, their teachers standing behind them. In many schools the discipline was very strict though tempered with kindness, the scholars not being allowed to speak, the superintendents to teachers only in whispers, yet the school steadily increased in numbers, proving they were not dissatisfied with the regulations."<sup>1</sup>

The economic and social prejudices of the Evangelical gentry were made perfectly plain by Hannah More in her ten schools in the village of Mendip. Her scholars learned "on week days such coarse work as may fit them for servants. I allow of no writing for the poor," she said. "The only books we use in teaching are two little tracts called, *Questions for the Mendip Schools*, and the *Church Catechism*. . . ."<sup>2</sup> For many years I have given away annually nearly two hundred Bibles, Common Prayer Books and Testaments. To teach the poor to read without providing them with safe books, has always appeared to me an improper measure, and this consideration induced me to enter upon the laborious undertaking of the *Cheap Repository Tracts*. In the morning I open school with one of the Sunday School prayers from the *Cheap Repository Tracts*. . . . Those who cannot read at all are questioned out of the first little question book for the Mendip Schools.<sup>3</sup> I do not delight in music, but observing that singing is a help to devotion in others, I thought it right to allow the practice.<sup>4</sup> About five o'clock we dismiss the little ones with a prayer and a hymn. . . .<sup>5</sup> Finding that what the children learned at school they commonly lost at home by the profaneness and ignorance of their parents, it occurred to me . . . to invite them to come together at

<sup>1</sup> Hudson, J. W., *The History of Adult Education*, p. 10. (London, Longmans, 1851.)

<sup>2</sup> Roberts, Wm., *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Hannah More*, Vol. II, p. 72 (N.Y., Harper, 1851.)

<sup>3</sup> *More, Hannah*, Vol II, p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

six in the Sunday evening . . . together with the elder scholars.<sup>1</sup> . . . Once in every six or eight weeks I give a little ginger bread. Once a year, I distribute little books according to merit . . . those who deserve most get a Bible . . . second rate merit gets a prayer book, the rest, Cheap Repository Tracts."<sup>2</sup>

Although writing was taught to adult poor as early as 1798,<sup>3</sup> its presence in the curriculum was unusual. Schools under strong Methodist and Evangelical influence were not only fearful of its secularizing effect upon the observance of the Sabbath, but also upon the religious character of the Sunday School movement. The Methodist Conference in 1823 advised "all our friends, mildly but steadily, to discountenance the teaching of the art of writing on the Lord's Day."<sup>4</sup> In other Adult Schools, such as those founded in Bristol by the "Scriptural Knowledge Institution," it was not offered until 1840, thirty years after founding, while history and geography were untaught until 1842.<sup>5</sup> The only liberalizing influence was that introduced by the Friends Society which taught penmanship in 1813.<sup>6</sup>

Arithmetic was under the same cloud. It bore no direct relation to reading of the Scripture, and it sometimes had to be taught on the Sabbath. In 1826, the Liverpool Conference of Methodists decided to offer it to elder scholars on one or two evenings a week but never on Sunday.<sup>7</sup> One early attempt to give a well-rounded course of elementary instruction was made in Birmingham in 1789. A group of Sunday School teachers organized the "Sunday Society," the object

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 82 For discussion of Adult Schools in prisons established by the Friends Society, see Simeral, Isabel, *Reform Movements in Behalf of Children in England in the Early 19th Century* (N.Y., Columbia University, 1916)

<sup>3</sup> Sadler, Michael, *Continuation Schools in England and Elsewhere*, p. 16. (Manchester, University Press, 1907.)

<sup>4</sup> Wardle, *op. cit*, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> Hudson, *op. cit*, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>7</sup> Wardle, *op. cit*, p. 29

of which was to teach writing and arithmetic to young men who had ceased to attend the Sunday School.<sup>1</sup>

The content of instruction given to the lay preachers, stewards, elders and inspectors in the movement was intensely practical, determined by their occupational background and supervised by Wesley himself. The orthodox clergy referred to them as a "ragged legion of preaching tinkers, scavengers, draymen and chimney sweepers."<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact, their trades varied in different localities. In Rochdale where a large number of the population made their living in the cotton factories, the rank and file of Methodism were weavers, colliers and artisans, while the preachers were woollen and handloom operators, fullers, cloth dressers and shoemakers.<sup>3</sup> They seldom abandoned their callings while preaching. When they did, Wesley admonished them "to devote as much time to reading as they were wont to devote to their trades."<sup>4</sup> His misgivings concerning their ability appear not only in frank statements but also in the overscrupulous care with which he superintended each Society. He travelled 4500 miles each year<sup>5</sup> for the purpose of preaching, also to maintain a close watch upon the actions of his subordinates, and to guide them in person whenever possible. He issued for their use a tract entitled *Directions concerning Pronunciation and Gesture*.<sup>6</sup> While such informal instruction proved to be of great value in training society officials in the practical management of men and funds, it became apparent that preachers needed more intensive teaching. Several Methodist students were expelled from Oxford on the charge, more or less unsubstantiated, of being unpre-

<sup>1</sup> See *Workers' Education*, Chap IV

<sup>2</sup> Tucker, R. L., *The Separation of the Methodists from the Church of England*, p 80 (N.Y., Methodist Book Concern, 1918)

<sup>3</sup> McLachlan, Herbert, *Methodist Unitarian Movement*, pp 112-113. (Manchester, University Press)

<sup>4</sup> Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 409.

<sup>6</sup> Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

pared for university work. Accordingly, Wesley and Lady Huntingdon, one of the few members of the aristocracy who gave him continuous support, established a divinity school. The first student was a collier, and the most distinguished, a mason.

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## CHAPTER III

### EDUCATION, THE ADULT POOR AND THE MANUFACTURERS

"Now what I want," says Mr. Gadgrind, "is Facts Teach the boys and girls Facts Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else . . . Stick to Facts, Sir."

CHARLES DICKENS.

#### I

WHILE the Church wrestled with the education of the poor, the governing classes, also on the defensive, struggled to maintain their homogeneity against the encroachments of the new rich. For the change in technological custom had created not only a new class of machine operatives. It had also thrust wealth into the hands of machine owners. These aspirants to fashion and power urged themselves upon the reluctant hospitality of the landed gentry and pressed old rulers for admittance into their councils.

According to Burke's Peerage, the social origin of the masters of the machines was doubtful to say the least. The men by whom steam and steel had been harnessed together for the production of goods were seldom members of the aristocracy. They were nearly always sons of labourers or craftsmen. James Beaumont Neilson, for example, the inventor of the hot blast furnace, was the son of a working-man whose wage never exceeded sixteen shillings a week. As a child he acquired the common elements of reading, writing, and arithmetic, but was removed from school at fourteen to be apprenticed to a millwright.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Smiles, Samuel, *Industrial Biography, Ironworkers and Tool Makers*, pp. 149-150. (London, Murray, 1876)

## ADULT POOR AND THE MANUFACTURERS 37

Joseph Bramah<sup>1</sup> was the oldest son of a *tenant* farmer, destined to follow the plough. Henry Maudsley's<sup>2</sup> father was a joiner, who put his son to work at twelve years of age as a powder-maker, and later as a carpenter's apprentice. William Fairbairn<sup>3</sup> was the son of a gardener. He worked in his youth in a colliery leading coals from behind the screen to the pitman's house. In other words, inventors had "walked forth upon the industrial world not from universities, but from hovels; not clad in silk and decked with honours, but as clad in fustian and grimed with soot and oil."<sup>4</sup> And although England owed its commercial supremacy to such men, the governing groups were extremely loath to admit them to anything approaching political or social equality.

The managers and owners of profitable factories, however, were made of stern stuff. Obstacles presented themselves to be overcome or neutralized. The unwillingness of the upper classes to accept their advice in affairs of state was regarded not as a defeat but as a challenge. They set their aggressive and inquiring minds to the task of meeting by indirection, a situation which had become unresponsive to direct methods.

It was natural for such men, taken as a group, to view the social disorder incidental to the industrial revolution with a certain amount of equanimity. A low standard of living amongst the poor did not interfere with their happiness. It only kept labour cheap. The manufacturers did not regard ignorance as a menace to the community, a subtle tool by which the ramparts of society were to be sapped. They were much more inclined, on the contrary, to consider illiteracy as an opportunity which placed not only the bodies of operatives at their disposal, but their minds as well.

Contemporary industrial prosperity was observed to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 198, 199.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 300-304.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183



rest upon invention. Inventors seemed to be the issue of the poor. What was more natural to industrial managers, panting for further mechanical improvements, than the supposition that in the ranks of uneducated machine operatives lay a richer store of inventive genius than had ever been turned to practical account? The question was how to find it; and having found it, how to develop it.

Those manufacturers and inventors who were of humble origin, were confident that self-education had been at least one rung of the ladder by which they had risen to success. They asked themselves why a judicious dose of similar mental exercise might not be productive of equally gratifying results among their employees. In this conclusion they were supported by contemporary public opinion.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the imagination of the public had been stimulated by the multiplication of goods and profits which resulted from the simple inventions of Hargreaves, Arkwright, Watt, Compton and others. The minds of manufacturer and statesman were made captive by the entrancing possibilities of the scientific method applied to the production of wealth. Each sought new fields in which to try out its potentialities. The Society of Arts for the encouragement of the science, manufactures and commerce of the country had been established in 1754.<sup>1</sup> It was followed during the last years of the eighteenth century by a host<sup>2</sup> of smaller local organizations designed to instruct the middle classes in the scientific principles upon which industry was based. The worker in pure science preserved a certain aloofness from the commercial exploitation of laboratory discoveries, but a fellowship of curiosity developed, nevertheless, between the man who studied the principles upon which the machine was built and the man who

<sup>1</sup> Sadler, *op cit*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Buckle, *op cit*, p. 348

built it and used it in the production of utilities. Rewards for inventions and improvements in chemistry, physics, and mechanics were offered, and successful manufacturers such as Robert Owen, devoted their leisure to scientific study. When they read papers<sup>1</sup> in which theoretical principles and industrial management were allied, they were given a grave and attentive hearing.

## II

The manufacturers of England coached in the scientific method were afraid neither of ignorance nor of knowledge among the lower orders. They approached the task of educating the poor as they approached the problem of production. Here, it seemed, was so much human raw material. How could it be acted upon and manipulated to increase profits?

Robert Owen, the earliest and most articulate of the manufacturer-educators, formulated the theory upon which their educational enterprises came to be founded. His attitude was similar to that of the successful research worker or inventor in non-human material who has seen invariable natural laws produce predictable results. He proposed to apply environment to the poor as the chemist applied heat, cold or ingredients to the test-tube. He had observed that method succeed in terms of steam, iron and cotton, why not also in flesh, blood and spirit? "Any general character," Owen said, "may be given to any community, even to the world at large, by the application of proper means, which means are to a great extent at the command and under the control of those who have influence in the affairs of men."<sup>2</sup>

Although the originator of many visionary schemes

<sup>1</sup> Podmore, *op cit*, p 57

<sup>2</sup> Owen, Robert, *The Life of Robert Owen*, Vol I, Appendix B, p. 265 (London, Wilson, 1857) "A new view of Society; or Essays on the Principle of the Formation of Character and the Application of the Principle to Practice"

for social amelioration, he held himself aloof from working class organizations. "He was by nature an autocrat, longing to impose a system upon the world, and not in the least anxious that the world at large should have the opportunity of examining it before its wholesale imposition."<sup>1</sup> Theoretically, he believed in education, as a means of liberating personality. Practically, however, he recommended it to the upper classes as a means of increasing the pecuniary advantage of the owners of industry.

This purpose and the influence of the machine upon his thought can be readily observed in the collection of "Essays on the Formation of Character." "If then," he says, "due care as to the state of your inanimate machines can produce such beneficial results, what may not be expected if you devote equal attention to your vital machines, which are more wonderfully constructed?"

"When you acquire a right knowledge of these, of their *curious mechanism*, of their *self-adjusting powers*; when the *proper main-spring* shall have been applied to their varied movements, you will become conscious of their real value, and you will be readily induced to turn your thoughts more frequently from your inanimate to your living machines; you will discover that the latter may be easily trained and directed to procure a large increase of pecuniary gain, while you may also derive from them high and substantial gratification.

"Will you then continue to expend large sums of money to procure the best mechanism of wood, brass or iron; to retain it in perfect repair, to provide the best substance for the prevention of unnecessary friction; and to save it from falling into unnecessary decay? Will you also devote years of intense application to understand the connection of various parts of these lifeless machines, to improve their effective powers, and to calculate with mathematical precision all their minute and combined movements? And when in these

<sup>1</sup> Hammond, *Town Labourer*, p. 42.

transactions you estimate time by minutes, and the money expended for the chance of increased gain by fractions, will you not afford some of your attention to consider whether a portion of your time and capital would not be more advantageously applied to improve your *living machines*? From experience which cannot deceive me, I venture to assure you that your time and money so applied, if directed by a true knowledge of the subject, would return you, *not five, ten or fifteen per cent. for your capital so expended, but often fifty, and in many cases a hundred per cent.*"<sup>1</sup>

It was one thing for Robert Owen, the manufacturer, to write these words, it was another for Robert Owen, the man, to carry them out in all their mechanistic baldness. He was possessed by nature of a rich endowment of human sympathy as well as executive ability. He had realized pecuniary independence at an unusually early age. Financial pressure to show results was not great. Consequently, in developing his idea that society could be altered and most human ills abolished by the scientific ordering of external circumstances, his personal attention was directed toward enterprises for social improvement rather than profit; toward children rather than adult operatives. Although fathers and mothers were invited to lectures and entertainments in the school at the New Lanark Mills, their presence was incidental. The school was primarily for infants, and the class attendance of adults was not encouraged. Of 485 attending evening classes in reading, writing, arithmetic, sewing, dancing, and music, only 141 were over 15 years of age. Of the 40 over twenty, 39 were women.<sup>2</sup>

Owen left the logical development of this theory as

<sup>1</sup> Owen, *op cit*, Vol I, pp 260-261

<sup>2</sup> Podmore, *op cit*, p 136 Another employees' school in which adults were included was that of the Messrs Bright in Rochdale Dobbs, A E, *Education and Social Movements*, p 165, note 2 (London, Longmans, 1919)

applied to adults to other manufacturers whose interest in education was frankly contingent upon its immediate returns in terms of new inventors and improved workmanship. The time element was so important to them that the education of children assumed secondary importance. Under the leadership of Lord Brougham they founded an organization known as the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, the purpose of which was the technical training of factory operatives. The Society achieved immediate popularity. Upon its roster were members of opposition parties, representatives of the radical Whigs, members of Parliament and the learned professions, fellows of scientific societies and the landed gentry. It was a common thing for five cabinet ministers to sit down at the monthly dinner.<sup>1</sup>

It was Brougham's idea that for men of humble position "knowledge of all the languages of the globe could not, in point of utility, be put in competition with an acquaintance with a single mechanical art".<sup>2</sup> An acquaintance with a mechanical art included some knowledge concerning underlying scientific facts and assumptions. It was necessary that these difficult abstractions be made palatable to uneducated men. Accordingly, the Society entered upon a campaign of simplification and popularization.

At first, the principle underlying Hannah More's successful tractarian method was adopted. Members of the Society devoted themselves to writing and printing cheap instructive literature. Among the most popular of these were two treatises entitled *The Rights of Industry* and the *Results of Machinery*, sometimes attributed to Brougham but actually written by Charles Knight, the publisher. These established, to the satisfaction of the author and members of the Society, the

<sup>1</sup> Smith, G. Barnett, *Leaders of Modern Industry, Biographical Sketches*. (London, Allen, 1894.) Charles Knight, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, New Series, Vol. II, June 27 to Sept 7, 1820, p. 59. (London, Hansard, 1821.)

dependence of the working-class upon capital, and besought the masses of the people to discountenance violence and outrage which were pointed to as the precursors of national decay. The claim of the Society to enduring fame, however, rests upon the *Penny Magazine*, the mental food, for a time, of a million working-class readers.<sup>1</sup> "Striking points of Natural History, Accounts of the great work of Art in Sculpture and Description of such Antiquities as Possess Historical Interest", filled its weekly and monthly issues. The Editorial Board congratulated itself upon the fact that there had "never been a single sentence to inflame a vicious appetite, no excitement for lovers of the marvellous, no tattle or abuse for the gratification of a diseased taste for personality, and above all no party politics."<sup>2</sup> The *Penny Magazine* was followed by the *Penny Encyclopedia*, which also appeared serially and was sold at the outset to the extent of 75,000 copies.<sup>3</sup> The work contained over 15,000 pages and the paper required to produce a single copy weighed 70 pounds.<sup>4</sup> Between 1832 and 1834 the *Gallery of Portraits* was published in which biographies of British and foreign statesmen, warriors, divines, men of science, letters and art appeared for the instruction and encouragement of the lower orders.<sup>5</sup> This was followed by the *Pictorial Bible* and similar literary productions.

But in their effort to be simple, Society authors and compilers sometimes achieved a forbidding heaviness of manner. An irreverent contemporary said that he would rather "hear the cook lecture on Bubble and Squeak than to hear one of the members of the Steam Intellect Society lecture on the difference between a halibut and a herring".<sup>6</sup> Each project of populariza-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, *op. cit.*, pp 102-103.

<sup>2</sup> *Penny Magazine*, March 31, 1832, Preface to First Number.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, J. B., *op. cit.*, p 104.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p 104

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 110.

<sup>6</sup> Hammond, *op. cit.*, p 207.

tion succeeded for a time and then had to be abandoned either because of the current taxation on print paper or because the price of each in turn exceeded the purchasing power of working-class buyers. The Society was forced to find another medium through which to instruct the poor in the wonders of science.

### III

The Mechanics' Institute, destined to play a leading rôle in the history of Workers' Education, started in an accidental way under the most modest of men. In 1796, Dr. John Anderson of the University of Glasgow gave a course in experimental physics to which a few persons "who happened to be tradesmen and mechanics were invited".<sup>1</sup> His idea was to popularize education by establishing an "anti-toga" or "gownless dress". He had a measure of success, but failed to reach working-men because few free tickets were distributed, the ordinary charge was one guinea, and the class met at an hour inconvenient for men employed during the day.<sup>2</sup> Somewhat later, as a result of his generosity, Anderson University was founded, and Dr. George Birbeck, a physician, appointed his successor.

In 1799 Dr. Birbeck began his first course on Natural and Experimental Philosophy. He found it necessary, in the absence of an instrument-maker in the town, to apply to an ordinary workshop for a piece of apparatus. In supervising the work, which was of a delicate nature, he visited "the joiner at his bench, the smith at his forge, the glass-blower at his furnace, the turner at his lathe" This intercourse with the artisans of Glasgow "discovered to him such evident indications of latent genius in the minds of workmen, accompanied with so much anxiety for the acquisition of knowledge, that

<sup>1</sup> *A E C*, p 13

<sup>2</sup> Godard, J G, *George Birbeck, the Pioneer of Popular Education*, p. 23. (London, Bemrose and Sons, 1884)

the spontaneous feeling of regret excited by their want of scientific information, was instantly succeeded by the benevolent wish that the means of obtaining this information could be placed within their reach". On other occasions, while discharging the duties of a teacher, Birbeck had further opportunities of watching the intelligent curiosity of "unwashed artificers". In one group gathered about a model of a centrifugal pump which was being constructed for him in a workshop, he observed such strong indications of the existence of the unquenchable spirit of inquiry that he asked himself the question: "Why are these minds left without the means of obtaining the knowledge which they so ardently desire; and why are the avenues to science barred to them because they are poor?" He determined to offer them a gratuitous course of lectures in the elements of science, and secured the admission of the most intelligent of the men to the lectures he was giving. This led the Doctor to devote a portion of his time entirely to mechanics, and later, in the autumn of 1800, to organize a Mechanics Class with an attendance of seventy-five members. Saturday evening was chosen for the lectures, and the first gave such satisfaction that its fame soon spread. At the succeeding meeting there was an audience of 200 workmen; at the third, another hundred had been added; and one month after the course was started, Dr. Birbeck talked to 500 artisans.<sup>1</sup>

There is no evidence that the founders of the Mechanics' Institute shared in the educational and pecuniary purposes of those who later dominated the councils of boards of management. As to practical results, Dr. Birbeck was uncertain and indifferent: "I am by no means sanguine in my expectation", he said, "that one artisan will be directed to the discovery of anything which is essential or important". As a student and educator, the project appealed to him from

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.



the point of view of the joy of learning. "I have become convinced that much pleasure could be communicated to the mechanic in the exercise of his art, and that the mental vacancy which follows a cessation from bodily toil would often be agreeably occupied by a few systematic philosophical ideas upon which, at his leisure, he might meditate". It seemed possible to him "that greater satisfaction in the execution of machinery must be experienced when the uses to which it may be applied, and the principles upon which it operates are well understood, than when the manual part alone is known".<sup>1</sup>

And when he described his venture to some of his colleagues, in these terms, "they scarcely condescended to bestow upon it a sneer, for it appeared to them so thoroughly visionary and absurd".<sup>2</sup>

After a lapse of almost twenty years, however, the idea of instructing working-men in the rudiments of science was revived in London by the editors of the *Mechanics Magazine*, Thomas Hodgskin and Joseph Robertson. The Doctor, who had in the meantime moved to the metropolis to practise medicine, replied with a hearty and encouraging letter. Soon after, in November 11, 1823, a meeting of two hundred artisans was held in the Crown and Anchor Tavern. Dr. Birbeck, Mr. Place and Mr. Bailey and the two editors were appointed members of a sub-committee. Place drew up the rules and the London Mechanics' Institute was formed.<sup>3</sup> By this time Dr. Birbeck's work had attracted the attention of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, and he was elected to the Presidency of the Institute, organized "for the purpose of enabling mechanics and artisans . . . to become

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Hudson, *op. cit.*, *passim*

<sup>3</sup> The more remote origin of the London Institute is traced by various authorities to a small society established in 1817 by Timothy Claxton called The Mechanical Institution (Godard, *op. cit.*, p. 35)

acquainted with science . . . that they may be qualified to make improvements and even new inventions".<sup>1</sup>

The movement inaugurated by the establishment of the London Institute was attended with instant popular success. The second anniversary was honoured by the presence of a royal duke, statesmen, men of affairs, and members of the Diffusion Society. Beves of ladies imparted grace to the scene. Other cities followed the example of London. An Institute was established in Leeds in 1824, Liverpool in 1825, Bristol in 1826. The plan increased in popular support until no town of any size could maintain its civic self-esteem without one. Dr. Birbeck's professional pre-eminence and lack of intellectual patronage commended him to all. The financial success of the Institute was guaranteed from the first day by the "princely contributions of the well-to-do." Money was subscribed by Lord Brougham, Earl Spencer, Wilberforce, James Mill, Ricardo, Grote, Cobbett, Bentham, and Place. Working men quickly showed their approval of the project. The first "to send their adhesion" were members of a small society consisting of working mechanics, tradesmen, and radical reformers. The "first five hundred names enrolled . . . consisted almost entirely of master mechanics, shop-keepers, and dealers in hardware with their workmen, cabinetmakers and house-painters".<sup>2</sup> In addition to class instruction and lectures on various sciences, among which mechanical philosophy and chemistry were considered the most important, libraries were formed, instruments and models collected for experimental purposes. Francis Place saw 800 artisans attending one lecture on chemistry.<sup>3</sup> Lord Byron gave his adhesion to the movement by saying: "It affords me pleasure to think what a mass of natural intellect this will call into action; if the plan succeed, . . . the ancient aristocracy of England will be secure for ages to come".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dobbs, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVE OF THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS

"Great institutions do not so forcibly indicate the universal eagerness for knowledge as those on a minor scale "

LORD BROUGHAM.

#### I

WHO was this person working in colliery or mill whose education so interested the governing class, the manufacturers, and the religious bodies of England? What manner of man had the factory system, with its insanitary towns, sordid homes, long hours of monotonous, repetitive work, produced? Was he worth the trouble? Did he want for learning? Or was it possible that the whole movement, motivated by apprehension on the one hand and acquisitiveness on the other, was based on an over-sanguine estimate of the capacity and eagerness of the poor to learn?

Opinion varied. There were those who regarded the education of the poor with "tittering hostility". There were those who feared that it would ruin good workmen, or lead to further political unrest. There were those who saw in it the only means of redeeming a bad situation but despaired of the material to be redeemed. The few who conceded success in educating the poor, held that it was conditional upon overcoming the reluctance of the poor to be educated.

Hannah More belonged among the optimists of the latter type. She thought the patients could be induced to swallow the unpleasant dose if encouraged by the "presence of kind words and little gratuities of their

bettters." But "so dull will be the poor," said she, "that even the most zealous teachers will flag in their exertions if not animated and supported by the wealthy." It pleased the evangelical upper classes to think of the poor as devoid of spiritual or intellectual aspirations apart from those suggested by themselves. Under such circumstances they could not be blamed for failing to offer what was not wanted. To Miss More and her kind, the willingness of the poor to learn, like the "willingness to be good", depended upon whether or not a master lent encouragement to the undertaking.

Farmer Hoskins in Hannah More's story of the *Sunday School* was outraged at the thought of educating the lower classes. "Of all the foolish notions", said he, "and new-fangled inventions to ruin the country, that of teaching the poor to read is the worst . . . it always does more harm than good." Hannah, however, with an eye to possible contributions, offered a counter argument. "Now the whole extent of learning," said she persuasively, "which we intend to give the poor is only to enable them to read the Bible . . . the knowledge of that book is the best security you can have, both for the industry and obedience of your servants. Is a poor fellow who can read his Bible so likely to sleep or drink away his few hours of leisure, as one who cannot read?"<sup>1</sup> Her reasoning seemed so sound that Farmer Hoskins gave a guinea to the support of the school.

Among economists and learned men, on the other hand, a certain amount of pessimism prevailed concerning the intellectual capacity of the lower orders. Adam Smith, in spite of his belief in the obligation of the state to educate all of its citizens, especially the poor, held out small hope of success. He based his judgment upon the deteriorating effect of the industrial environment. "The man whose life is spent in per-

<sup>1</sup> More, Hannah, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 25-46.

forming a few simple operations," said he, "of which the effects are perhaps always the same, becomes as stupid and as ignorant as it is possible to become. The torpor of his mind renders him not only incapable of relishing any rational conversation but of conceiving any generous, noble or tender sentiment. . . . Of the great and extensive interests of his country he is altogether incapable of judging."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Johnson scorned those who patronized the literary workmen of the time. Speaking of a shoemaker who had turned poet he said, "They had better furnish the man with good implements for his trade, than raise subscriptions for his poems."<sup>2</sup>

But what of the facts? Did the poor accept education as only another burden imposed upon them by the more fortunate classes? Did they regard it as irrelevant to the needs and preoccupations of their daily lives? If there was a demand for knowledge, how was it expressed? If the poor had educational initiative, what form did it take?

The answer to these questions lies in scattered attendance records and in other documentary remains of the working class. From these it is evident that the poor were far from indifferent to the missionary efforts of their betters. On the contrary, they recognized a relationship between knowledge and freedom and were able to discriminate between education offered for the purpose of maintaining the existing order, and that designed ultimately to release them from economic restraints. Their only means, however, of showing approval of an educational venture was to attend in great numbers. Likewise their only method of indicating disapproval was to withdraw attendance or to organize independent enterprises for self-instruction. The demand of the poor for knowledge must consequently be traced with these facts in mind.

<sup>1</sup> Smith, Adam, *op. cit.*, pp. 263-264.

<sup>2</sup> Boswell, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 171

The earliest upper-class educational experiment to enjoy the eager attendance of the poor, only to have it followed by disappointment and withdrawal, was the Adult School. In the beginning, the enthusiasm of grown men and women for learning was most impressive. As a matter of fact, the first Adult School in Bristol was opened in 1812 by a working man. William Smith, who occupied "a rank in life no higher than that of a door-keeper of a Dissenting Chapel," with the assistance of an influential Quaker, Stephen Prust, and a Bible Society, found a room and organized an "Institution for Instructing Adult Persons to Read the Holy Scriptures." Two students enrolled. One was William Wood, aged sixty-three, the other was Jane Burrance, aged forty.<sup>1</sup> The number increased each week until the room was filled. "The order, neatness and cleanliness of these people, their anxiety to learn, and the heartfelt gratitude they evidenced for the exertions thus benevolently made for their benefit proved most gratifying to Mr. Smith and his more wealthy assistants. Encouraged by the success of this new undertaking they sought other apartments in the same neighbourhood, for the reception . . . of the illiterate poor who were daily applying for admission." At the end of a year, as a result of unwearying exertion in securing teachers and rooms for assembling classes, there were thirteen classes with 432 men and women.<sup>2</sup> Smith gave three shillings a week to the enterprise out of his wages of eighteen, and on his death it is said, "the only reward this estimable man received was from above. He was blessed with length of days and died . . . in the Dial Almshouse in peace and hope of his Redeemer."<sup>3</sup>

The reception accorded the Adult Sunday Schools in Wales had been even more cordial. After 1730 Griffith Jones was instrumental in establishing 3495

<sup>1</sup> Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4, note

Schools with an attendance of more than 158,000 mature persons.<sup>1</sup> The older poor attended the Sunday Schools with the children in such numbers that shopkeepers could not supply them with spectacles or Welsh Bibles. Three or four scholars often had but one Testament between them. Some had no more than a tattered leaf.<sup>2</sup> In Ipswich, a little group of female scholars had among them three women aged 35, 75, and 94 respectively. The two latter were prevented from attending in winter by age and weather, but expressed their intention of returning in the spring, should they live so long. Schools were opened not only in chapels, but in barns lent by farmers in the summer-time. For a time the movement expanded phenomenally. Whole villages attended.<sup>3</sup> In Bristol during the first year classes more than doubled, and others were established in twenty surrounding towns.<sup>4</sup> In 1849, 250,000 persons had been taught to read in the United Kingdom.<sup>5</sup>

At some time between 1814 and 1834, however, a decline in attendance began to indicate dissatisfaction among the poor. The enthusiasm for knowledge which had swept England like wild-fire suddenly receded. Although enrolment figures during the period are scanty and of questionable accuracy, the few that are available show clearly the trend of events. In the one city of Bristol, for instance, between 1812 and 1834, Adult Schools increased from one school to one hundred

<sup>1</sup> Montmorency, *op cit*, p 204 Another authority states that between 1737 and 1760, 150,213 scholars were enrolled (A.E.C., p 11).

<sup>2</sup> Sadler, *op cit*, p 15 See also Pole, T., *History and Origin and Progress of Adult Schools* (1815)

<sup>3</sup> Hudson, *op cit*, p 3

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p 6

<sup>5</sup> Adults also attended the early Ragged Schools. About 100 persons of all ages between sixteen and thirty-five attended the Marylebone Ragged School. In East London the number of adults attending Sunday Schools in 1816 were estimated at 600. In Manchester a few years later ages ranged from six to twenty-five, and some scholars were known to attend for twenty years (Dobbs, *op. cit*, p 154, note 1).

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and thirty-six. And in 1849 they decreased from 136 to 18.

## THE ADULT SCHOOL MOVEMENT IN BRISTOL

Date	Number of Adult Schools			Attendance		
	For Men	For Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
1798 <sup>1</sup>	1	1	2	In Nottingham		
1812 <sup>2</sup>			1			
1813 <sup>3</sup>	9	9	18	222	231	453
1814 <sup>4</sup>	21	23	44	540	708	1248
	Greatest	No. recorded				
		136 <sup>5</sup>				
1834 <sup>6</sup>			36	400	268	668
1843 <sup>7</sup>	12	13	25			
1849 <sup>8</sup>	10	8	18	200	180	380

Other records indicate that although new students were admitted to the number of 510 in 1811, the number had decreased four years later to 49.<sup>9</sup>

Attendance figures are accompanied by others equally

<sup>1</sup> Sadler, *op cit*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Hudson, *op cit*, p. 3

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5. Another authority states that the Schools numbered 54 (A E C, p. 11).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.



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significant concerning the teaching efficiency of Adult Schools.

COMPARISON OF NUMBER IN ATTENDANCE WITH  
NUMBERS OF READERS IN CERTAIN ADULT  
SCHOOLS AND CLASSES IN ENGLAND IN THE  
EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY.

Location of School or Class	Number	Number of Readers Produced	Percentage of Readers Produced
Bath <sup>1</sup>	3461	1040	.30
Highlands <sup>2</sup>	3000	800	.25
Bristol (men) <sup>3</sup>	2333	580	.25
Bristol (women) <sup>4</sup>	2265	576	.22

Apparently only one out of every three men or women who made the effort to attend an Adult School learned to read.<sup>5</sup> "The number who say they read an easy book is three-fourths", said one Government report, "but this commonly includes all who can spell their way through words".<sup>6</sup>

A few years later the Mechanics' Institute underwent a similar cycle of popularity succeeded by failure. Dr. Birbeck's purpose in undertaking the Glasgow experiment had been that of a teacher whose only wish was to inspire the public with a love for knowledge. He chose the field of science because it was his own hobby and served to also explain objects in the everyday life of the average workman. The motives of the Diffusion Society in adopting the Mechanics' Institute were

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13

<sup>5</sup> Dobbs, *op. cit*, pp 155-186.

<sup>6</sup> Ludlow, J. M., and Jones, Lloyd, *The Progress of the Working Class*, p. 16 (London, Strahan, 1867) "Children who attended Sunday Schools four or five years were unable to spell house or cow"

less disinterested. Its members wished in the first place, to improve workmanship and increase production and profits; in the second place, to make the Institute a credit to themselves. To the end of carrying out the first purpose they accepted Robert Owen's theory, that the living machine "may be easily trained . . . to procure a large increase in pecuniary gain",<sup>1</sup> and embodied it in the Institute constitutions. "No species of knowledge is necessary or fitting for the operative", stated one clause, "but such as respects the science or practice of his art, and tends to make him a better workman and more useful to his employer".<sup>2</sup>

In addition to class instruction and lectures on various sciences, libraries were established and instruments and models collected for experimental purposes. In 1831 there were 55 Institutes with 7000 members.<sup>3</sup> By 1850, 610 Institutes had been established in England and Scotland with a membership of 102,050, and an annual book distribution of 651,500.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, however, the Institute of 1850 was not the same as the Institute of 1820. The attention of founders had shifted from the more difficult task of teaching working men the fundamentals of science, to the more showy one of making the Institute a going concern. It is worthy of note that the first cause of dissatisfaction among working class members of the London organization was occasioned by the poor quality of instruction offered. The men claimed that courses were desultory and impractical, and that the library was deficient in technical works. The number of lectures dwindled from 50 or 90 per course covering only one branch of science, to one per evening covering

<sup>1</sup> Owen, *op cit*, Vol I, pp 260-261.

<sup>2</sup> Hudson, *op cit*, pp. 55, 56, 130.

<sup>3</sup> Ludlow and Jones, *op cit*, p 169.

<sup>4</sup> Hudson, *op cit*, p 6. In 1861 there were "supposed to be" above 1200 of such Institutes with 200,000 members (Ludlow and Jones, *op. cit*, p 169).

every branch of science.<sup>1</sup> The Institutes had become not only mere training schools for local industries, but poor training schools at that.

The dissatisfaction of working-class students was increased further by what amounted to taxation without representation. For the founders of Institutes were architecturally ambitious. Their success as business men in large scale production and organization, led them to be somewhat grandiose in their educational pretensions. The adjectives "munificent" and "princely" were applied to gifts of money for the education of the poor. Givers are described as "wealthy," "illustrious" and "powerful."<sup>2</sup> In order to make the Institute appear successful in the generally accepted sense of the word, contributions were no sooner made than spent in the purchase or erection of extensive premises, located in central sections of cities, insulated by their environment from the squalor and distress surrounding the lives of Institute students. Of Liverpool it is said, "there is no town in the kingdom which has so many temples dedicated to the improvement of mankind . . . nor can any city afford equal evidence of the zeal of its merchant princes in raising mansions for the advancement of civilization." The development of this Institute was typical. It had moved as a small society from a chapel schoolroom to by far the most extensive establishment of its kind. This building was said by observers to form "an architectural ornament to the town as well as a monument to the munificence of a wealthy community in the cause of education."<sup>3</sup>

The administration of large sums of money invested in city property of constantly increasing value or burdened with debts occasioned much financial anxiety and led to friction among directors. Much time was lost in settling rival claims to leadership between different groups of financial supporters. In Manchester, the directory was elected for five years from among

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p 50

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p 96

those who contributed small but regular sums to the expenses of the Institute. A competing claim to control was set up by those who had subscribed large but single sums used in the erection of the building. As was natural, the distinction between the two was finally abolished and the property vested in their joint control.<sup>1</sup>

On the question of administration,<sup>2</sup> donors and honorary members were agreed upon one point, the exclusion of working-class students from everything except attending lectures and paying fees. Not only were they denied participation in the control of funds and the arrangement of curricula, but their scantily filled pocket-books were invaded; first, for quarterly or semi-annual dues for which, as wage earners, they found it hard to save; second, to make up deficits incurred by the ambitious schemes of wholesale education inaugurated by donors. The first recourse of directors in the chronic financial embarrassment which beset the Institutes was to ask students to increase their fees.

Under these circumstances, working-class students moved out and the directors surrendered to the financial competence of the middle class. Science, however, found small favour among prosperous shopkeepers who desired to use their newly acquired margin of leisure for self-improvement. It was associated in their minds with the drab everyday business of making a living. People rising in the social scale wanted an introduction to those branches of learning which had acquired reputability as the peculiar adornment of the gentry. The Institute accordingly substituted literature for mechanics and chemistry<sup>3</sup> and became the small tradesman's finishing school.<sup>4</sup> When Lord Brougham

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See *Workers' Education*, Chap VI

<sup>3</sup> At Manchester the number of science lectures delivered annually decreased by 60 per cent. between 1835 and 1850 (Dobbs, *op. cit.*, p. 178).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

visited Manchester in 1835 there were three times as many merchants, manufacturers and clerks upon the rolls as mechanics or operatives.<sup>1</sup> In Birmingham conditions were the same. Only one-half of those entered at the working-class subscription were receiving weekly wages.<sup>2</sup> It was generally acknowledged that only one-twentieth of the students of the Mechanics' Institute in Great Britain were members of the artisan class.<sup>3</sup> Like the Adult School, the Mechanics' Institute continued its corporate existence for over one hundred years, but lost the confidence of the working-class movement soon after it began.

## II

Supporters of education among the manufacturers and governing classes met these phenomena with characteristic explanations. Drawing conclusions from his experience in the schools at the New Lanark Mills, Robert Owen ascribed poor attendance to fatigue. Prior to the shortening of hours in that plant the average attendance in the evening school out of a factory population of 1800 to 2000 had been less than 100 per night. After a reduction from 11½ to 10½ hours, the average nightly attendance more than tripled, varying from 380 to 396.<sup>4</sup> Others were disposed to impute the decline of interest to the fact that the poor were unwilling to expose their ignorance before their own children, with whom they sat in the school-room. It was said furthermore that they chafed under necessary discipline; that teachers were few who had the ability and willingness to exhibit a "softness of manner, a patient forbearance to meet their slowness . . . of comprehension".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 130, 131.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p 63.

<sup>3</sup> Brougham, Henry, *Address to the Manchester Mechanics' Institute*, pp 14, 15 (Manchester, Taylor and Garnett, 1835)

<sup>4</sup> Podmore, *op. cit.*, pp. 81, 135, 136.

<sup>5</sup> Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

These explanations were sound as far as they went. Bodily fatigue in working men or capitalist interferes with evening study. Ignorant folk, high or low, shrink from the jibes of their young people. The adult poor as well as the adult rich are not insensible to the manners of their teachers. But as explanations of the collapse of what amounted to a folk movement they leave much to be desired.

The fact of the matter was that although the economic and political conditions surrounding the poor in 1830 were practically the same as those in 1800 and 1820, the adult scholar had become a different man. Less biased observers than members of the upper classes reported, that the labouring poor appreciated a really good education and were prepared to make sacrifices in order to obtain it for their children. Lord Brougham informed the House of Commons in 1816 that "the lowest and the most abandoned expressed the utmost anxiety to have their children educated".<sup>1</sup> Many an unlettered miner or artisan seemed to possess a sense of what was a well or a poorly conducted school. In recognizing collective action as the best means of bettering himself, he became officially or emotionally a member of the working class. The only instruction, therefore, on which he would bestow his attendance was that which he considered useful to an occupational group with a political or economic grievance.

The Methodist Adult Schools were somewhat alive to the presence among the unlettered poor of criticism along those lines. Although Wesley, himself, was opposed for religious and perhaps economic reasons to secular instruction, he was surrounded by lay preachers and stewards whose origin kept them in close contact with the wishes of the rank and file of Methodists. They realised that the emotional appeal of the new gospel was not enough for a group of people becoming more and more aware of political

<sup>1</sup> Hansard, 2nd series, Vol. XXXIV, p. 639.

and economic exploitation. They saw that loyalty to the organization depended in no small measure upon Wesley's willingness to devise a compromise in the curriculum. As a result, a decision was finally reached at the Liverpool Methodist Conference of 1826 to the effect that "neither the art of writing nor any of the merely secular branches of knowledge should be taught on the Lord's Day. But we *strongly* recommend that writing and the elements of arithmetic shall be taught to the elder scholars, both male and female, one or more week-day evenings, *as a reward for regular attendance and good conduct on the Sabbath*". Wesley was forced to ease his conscience with the reflection that "perhaps God may have a deeper purpose therein than men are aware";<sup>1</sup> and secular knowledge was offered as a bait to entice the poor to their prayers. Doctrinal considerations had to bow to the educational demand of the poor and to the necessity of maintaining attendance upon religious exercises.

The Adult Schools under Anglican or Evangelical influence, on the other hand, were less flexible. Alarmed by the unrest in the industrial population, they could not refrain from adding an economic supplement to the catechism. Such questions were put as, "What are laws?" The answer the poor were required to make was, "Laws are wise institutions to preserve the rich in their possessions and to restrain the vicious poor".<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the tendency of the upper classes to regard education primarily as an industrial opiate, caused the efficiency of the schools to vary with the state of social disorder. When the poor were depressed and unprotesting, funds ran out, teachers were unpaid and the equipment became inadequate. When, on the contrary, riots and disorder were reported, money was plentiful and expansion began. Says one observer of the

<sup>1</sup> Wardle, *op. cit.*, p. 29, note 44. Author's italics.

<sup>2</sup> Tawney, R. H., *Education and Social Progress*, p. 8. (Manchester, Co-operative Union, Ltd., 1912)

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situation, "voluntary educational effort was made under the promise of some present or impending calamity".<sup>1</sup>

### III

It was inevitable under such conditions for the passive tactic of withdrawal to be repudiated and for working men to resort to active educational measures. When Charity School, Ragged School, Adult School and Mechanics' Institute failed to offer instruction useful to the poor in solving their economic difficulties, the self-taught among them began to preach self-instruction and to organize groups for mutual improvement.

Preoccupation in the promise of science was not peculiar to the educated and governing class of England. The poor who lived in the tragic wake of mechanical invention sensed in an obscure fashion not only the part it had played in their misfortunes, but the service it could be caused to render their future. Mutual Improvement Societies for the study of science, which sometimes antedated, sometimes opposed, and sometimes merged into the Mechanics' Institutes, were to be found in every town and village.

The first of these organizations was established in Birmingham, after the year 1789, by a group of working men who had withdrawn from a "Sunday Society" organized by Sunday School teachers. They formed a class for mutual instruction in Mechanics, Hydrostatics, Electricity, Pneumatics and Astronomy. A few of the more intelligent members delivered lectures before working-class groups in foundries and factories of the town. One member, Mr. Thomas Clarke, held frequent meetings at his own house, for a group of artisans who became known as the "Cast Iron Philosophers".<sup>2</sup> The London Mechanics' Institute developed from a

<sup>1</sup> Kay, Joseph, *The Social Condition and Education of the People in England*, p 152. (N.Y., Harper, 1863.)

<sup>2</sup> Hudson, *op. cit*, pp. 29, 30.



nucleus of working mechanics who, before its formal organization, had assembled nightly in a coffee-house for systematic reading and instruction. The Institutes of Aberdeen and Edinburgh also owed their origin in 1834 to working mechanics.<sup>1</sup> Mill hands organized a mutual improvement society in Holbeck which later became an Institute. The Peoples' Instruction Society was founded in Birmingham by a Methodist stockinger named Brooks. Its equipment consisted of a reading-room, class-room, library, with a debating society, lectures, elementary classes and music.<sup>2</sup> Four workingmen in Leeds formed a society in 1844 which was typical in its development of similar working men's educational organizations. For a time they met at the house of one member, but when other operatives asked leave to join them they adjourned to an old garden house. Reading, writing, grammar, and arithmetic were taught in a litter of rakes, hoes and broken flower pots. Many listeners hung around the door while the teacher, always one of the operatives, dispensed knowledge from within. When the membership expanded they moved to larger premises in a backyard. There, until 1849, sixty machine operators, silk dressers, joiners, coach-workers and shopkeepers met for study.<sup>3</sup> Hudson writing in 1857 says "the desire for intellectual amusement seems to have entered into all of the ramifications of this town (Nottingham) for there are several working men's libraries held in public-houses." Lectures on astronomy were delivered to attentive smokers sitting before pots of ale.<sup>4</sup> Another author<sup>5</sup> refers to a society of wood-carvers, founded in 1833, which acquired a valuable collection of books, casts and engravings; also to a book-buying and book-lending society, formed of six workmen who collected old English ballads.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 39, 58.

<sup>2</sup> Dobbs, *op. cit.*, p. 183, and note 1.

<sup>3</sup> Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>5</sup> Ludlow and Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 179, note 2.

Compared to Institutes in large industrial centres, these little societies were very modest. But their flexibility of administration adapted them to the intellectual needs and financial limitations of the workers. No mention is made of a hierarchy of officers or complex network of committees. The direction of their simple affairs often rested in the hands of one committee rendered responsive to the wishes of the membership by quarterly elections. Fees varied from one half-penny to three pence per week. Out of this small sum libraries were collected and reading-rooms supplied with newspapers and periodicals.

Many observers testified to the solid character of the information thus acquired. Engels reports having heard many a working man, whose fustian jacket scarcely held together, speak upon geological, astronomical and other subjects with more power than the educated German of the time possessed. The epoch-making products of modern philosophy and politics were read by working men.<sup>1</sup> Many a coal miner in the Tyne Valley would have several volumes of Scott's novels on his shelf, one on mathematics or English History and a few Methodist classics.<sup>2</sup> There were other artisans who knew Milton, Byron or Shelley, and could repeat portions of Shakespeare by heart.<sup>3</sup> In politics, Blackstone, Tait, Bentham and Godwin were read. A few developed an interest in continental views of society by perusing Proudhon's *Property*.<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Gaskell in "Mary Barton" described the botanizing weavers of Lancashire, who were "equally familiar with the Linnæan or the Natural System and knew the name and habitat of every plant within a day's walk from their dwellings". . . . There were entomologists too,

<sup>1</sup> Engels, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> Dobbs, *op. cit.*, p. 197; quoted from *On Coals and Coal Pits*, pp. 218-225, by a Traveller Underground, 1853.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>4</sup> Engels, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

"practical, shrewd, hard working men, who pored over every new specimen with real scientific delight".<sup>1</sup>

Self-education was the only form of instruction open to leaders of the British working-class movement for a hundred years and its quality may be judged by the type of leadership produced. Francis Place, for instance, attended private adventure schools until his twelfth year. At fourteen he was apprenticed to a breeches maker. He married young and encountered all the hardships incident to low wages and unemployment. When out of work and half-starved, however, at the age of twenty-two, he waded through many volumes in history, voyages, politics, law and philosophy. He taught himself decimals, equations, the square, cube and biquadrate roots, logarithms and algebra. As for Euclid, he got through six books with difficulties such as few would surmount. "I knew of no one of whom I could ask a question or receive any kind of instruction, and the subject was therefore at times painful".<sup>2</sup>

The experience of Thomas Cooper, by trade a shoemaker and by preference a leader of the Chartists, was similar. "Historical reading, or the grammar of some language," he writes in his autobiography, "was my first employment on week-day mornings. Whether I rose at three or four, until seven o'clock, a book in my hand while I breakfasted, gave me another half-hour's reading. When in the cold of winter, we could not afford to have a fire till my mother rose, I used to put a lamp on a stool and standing before it, wrapped up in my mother's old red cloak, I read until seven. I thought it possible that by the time I reached the age of twenty-four I might be able to master the elements of Latin, Greek, Hebrew and French, might get well

<sup>1</sup> Gaskell, E. C., *Mary Barton*, pp 40, 41. (London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1906)

<sup>2</sup> Wallas, Graham, *The Life of Francis Place, 1771-1854*, pp. 17-19. (N Y, Longmans, 1898)

through Euclid and through a course in Algebra".<sup>1</sup> The intellectual histories of Lovett, the Chartist, Holyoake, the Co-operator and many another obscure weaver, cotton operative and miner in England was the same.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to producing exceptional men for prominent posts in the working-class movement, self-education trained all the less known leaders of the second line of defence. The habit of debate in Mutual Improvement and Methodist Societies, tended to direct the most promising working men into oratory,<sup>3</sup> lecturing<sup>4</sup> and politics. Others became publishers, pamphleteers, preachers and teachers.

But was knowledge secured under such hardships an assistance in summoning mental and spiritual poise for routine work? Could working men thus trained carry on daily tasks of ordinary life with enthusiasm and earnestness? Apparently, with a few exceptions, they could. It was said of Wesley's lay preachers, for instance, that in spite of their limited intellectual attainment and social disability, they were equal to every occasion and were found to be particularly well qualified for their work by a living sympathy with the poor, a rare knowledge of men, and skill in address. The same was true of working men who became teachers, of whom the number was large. For, however strongly humanitarians may have talked, written and felt on the subject of educating England, they rarely assumed the humdrum task of teaching Englishmen. The fine fire of philanthropy in which ladies and gentlemen of position volunteered their services soon died down.

<sup>1</sup> Cooper, Thomas, *The Life of Thomas Cooper, passim* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1872)

<sup>2</sup> McLachlan, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Gammage, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> "Some of the most successful lecturers in manufacturing and mining districts were self-taught amateurs, often of the same class as their hearers" One of these named Richardson was provincial in his dialect, but correct in his statements. (Dobbs, *op. cit.*, p. 171, and note 1.)

They overrated the rational side of human personality. They formed exaggerated notions of the speed at which results could be accomplished and became discouraged with the venture.<sup>1</sup> The real teachers of the poor were themselves poor men. According to testimony made before a Parliamentary Committee in 1834, it was stated that of 120 unsalaried teachers in a Sunday School for the secular instruction of 2700 scholars (who, of course, in the nature of things were of working-class origin,) all save two or three were former scholars.<sup>2</sup> Owen chose as the first teacher in his infant school "one Sam Buchanan, a simple hearted weaver".<sup>3</sup> The students selected for normal training in 1841 in the Battersea Normal School were from humble spheres, sons of small tradesmen, bailiffs, servants and superior mechanics.<sup>4</sup> Their training was planned to prepare them for humble and subordinate positions. The teacher was a parent to his scholars "and to his superiors an intelligent servant."<sup>5</sup>

According to J. P. K. Shuttleworth the teachers employed fell into three groups, the trained, the partially trained and the untrained. Of these, the trained formed only twenty-six per cent., whereas the self-taught formed a large proportion of all three classes. Some of the latter, the writer admits in spite of a strong class bias, were "truly valuable men of great originality and distinguished by a love of their work, an attitude not shared by teachers drawn from the higher ranks."<sup>6</sup> Some of them displayed a vigorous missionary spirit in organizing schools. "My school,"

<sup>1</sup> Dobbs, *op cit*, pp 139, 155, note 3. (See also, Ludlow and Jones, *op cit*, pp 167-168)

<sup>2</sup> Montmorency, *op cit*, p. 206

<sup>3</sup> Podmore, *op cit*, p 133

<sup>4</sup> Shuttleworth, J. P. K., *Four Periods of Education*, p 400. (London, Longmans, 1862)

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p 403

<sup>6</sup> Kay, Joseph, *The Education of the Poor in England and Europe*, p. 268 (London, Hatchard, 1846.)

said Thomas Cooper, "was a perfect passion with me for a time. I was in the school-room often at five in the morning until nine at night, taking my meals in a hasty imperfect way while the boys were gone home for theirs. I had quill pens to make in great numbers, the first work in the morning, and for a time I had early classes each morning. Then again in the evenings, although other day schools broke up at five, I drew the older scholars around the globe and described the countries upon it. I was intent upon making their school-room their delight."<sup>1</sup>

In the England of 1836 when eighty-five per cent. of the population was wholly uninstructed, self-educated workers could obtain "incessant occupation" by traveling day after day, by cart, by railroad, by coach, speaking in barns, coffee-houses and chapels, and sometimes scandalizing the orthodox by performing chemical experiments in the pulpits of dissenting chapels.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, hard intellectual toil and irregular hours of work took toll from among men already fatigued by manual exertion. Cooper's un-directed study of Hamlet, Lear and all the languages including Arabic, resulted in an early illness and a certain mental unbalance which limited his usefulness. Some, like James Morrison, a self-taught builder, died too young, after years of intense intellectual work.<sup>3</sup> Others, like William Benbow, who earned a living as a shoemaker and carried a side line of preaching and pamphleteering, developed psychosis. It is suggested that the vicissitudes of the latter's life, and especially the strain of his self-tutelage, served gradually to unbalance a never wholly stable mind.<sup>4</sup> As teachers

<sup>1</sup> Cooper, *Life*, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Dobbs, *op cit*.

<sup>3</sup> Beer, Max, *History of British Socialism*, Vol I, p 314 (London, Bell, 1920)

<sup>4</sup> Carpenter, N, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol XXV, No. 3, pp. 491-498.

their chief deficiency, easily understood when one realizes that their own training was undertaken in solitude without the companionship of other students, was "their inability to put questions well or readily"; nor were they in general "good tacticians in moving their children". Some, like a miner who, entirely uneducated, taught himself in English, French, Italian, Spanish, Latin, Greek, Arithmetic, Algebra, were diligent and humble minded. Others, less well endowed in character, exhibited their little learning with pride and self-assurance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kay, *The Education of the Poor in England*, p 269

## CHAPTER V

### CHARTISM AND A WORKERS' PROGRAMME OF EDUCATION

"It would be better for men to be deprived of education than to receive their education from their masters, for education, in that sense, is no better than the training of cattle that are broken to the yoke"

THOMAS HODGSKIN.

#### I

THE first sustained effort of the working class in England to obtain a measure of political and economic security was known as the Chartist Movement. It covered a period of some fifteen years between 1832 and 1848. It was marked by several social crises in which the rich and poor faced one another with weapons drawn. Consequently observers from the upper classes emphasized the bitterness and violence of the struggle while conventional historians of a later generation consistently refused to regard the movement as more than a futile demonstration against Parliament by mobs of vexed poor, punctuated here and there with broken heads. To the student of the intellectual history of the working class, however, the import of Chartism is not pivoted upon collisions between disappointed working people and the military of a needlessly frightened government. It hinges upon the fact that the first major operation of the working class was organized by self-educated working men; that Chartism was a movement for knowledge with a well formulated programme of education.

The principal issue of the movement was political. The members of the working class wanted the ballot and they embodied their wishes in mammoth petitions



which were carried to Parliament with considerable ceremony by mobs of working men. The governing classes were characteristically reluctant to extend the franchise. Parliamentary debates of the time were filled with what have become classical objections to manhood suffrage.

United in the ultimate aim of their efforts, Chartists were divided, however, on the tactics to be employed. A group known as Rotunda Radicals believed that more could be accomplished by force than by persuasion. They devoted their energies to intimidating the Government by appeals or threatened appeals to violence. They developed the idea of the general strike. But their efforts were spasmodic. Their followers were always poorly disciplined and half hearted. On one notable occasion, several thousand miners, armed with muskets and pick-axes, were dispersed by thirty soldiers, and Force Chartism finally fell under the influence of sophisticated middle-class careerists and disintegrated.

The second wing of the movement known as Knowledge Chartism was led by self-educated working men to whom the political franchise was important not only as an end in itself, but also as a means of distributing knowledge more widely. These men did the spade work of Chartism. When petitions were written, they wrote them. When the working class was to be organized, they organized it. When support was to be solicited from upper-class sympathizers, they co-operated with the Philosophical Radicals. In addition, they gave to Chartism its fundamental intellectual flavour. Under their guidance the movement became a quest for ideas,<sup>1</sup> beginning quite in character, with a programme of education and ending with the composition of text books.

<sup>1</sup> West, Julius, *A History of the Chartist Movement, passim* (London, Constable, 1920)

## II

The strong educational trend of the Chartist movement was due in part to two causes: the disappointment of the workers in the Mechanics' Institute and their distrust of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. The activities of both of these organizations were carried on by the same people and were, of course, two expressions of the same upper-class movement.

The formation of the Chartist programme of education was preceded by a long period of dissatisfaction with the conduct of the Mechanics' Institute. Although Chartists differed among themselves, the economic and political conditions which had produced the party committed to Force and that favouring Knowledge were the same. For the machine had worked both ways. It had not only consolidated the interests of the owners of industry by giving them an insight into the potentialities of the new technology; it had discovered the operative to himself as a member of a class. Out of a jumble of forces the individual "poor" man of the 18th century emerged as the collective "working" man of the 19th. He saw himself a joint tenant of poverty and misfortune, an indispensable unit to his employer only as long as he acted in concert with his fellows. It became apparent, however, that the Institute was not to be used as a means of training workers in collective action. Manufacturers, donors and governors were determined to make lecture halls and class-rooms centres of upper-class propaganda. To this end they excluded workers from representation in governing committees,<sup>1</sup> and exercised a censorship over reading matter in Institute reading-rooms.

During the 30's and 40's the question of adminis-

<sup>1</sup> This policy was not in conformity with that practised in Anderson University where teachers of science were in control. There in 1808 the library was entrusted to members of the mechanics' class (Hudson, *op cit*, p. 36.)

trative control was evidently a matter of concern to all interested in the scientific education of artisans and the exclusion of working men from boards of directors a source of some embarrassment to the more liberal. Contemporary writers place considerable emphasis upon the few Institutes which actually conceded to their demands. Shuttleworth explains apologetically that some of them were "partly conducted by artisans themselves, in order that the interest they felt may be constantly excited and maintained."<sup>1</sup> Harriet Martineau<sup>2</sup> points out the fact that "two-thirds of the committee of the London Mechanics' Institute were working men; and a continually larger proportion of that class became directors until in eleven years from its formation, the directors were chosen altogether by and from the general body."

Other writers were equally anxious to show that demand for control on the part of working men was not necessarily an evidence of capacity for management. Hudson says that when, in 1821, as a result of "want of attention" on the part of managers, the artisans of the Glasgow Mechanics' Institute seceded and formed an independent Institute, the experiment was short-lived. The brave groups which resolved that "as the institution had begun without the assistance of the wealthy and influential citizens—it should be continued without their support", met the fate of countless other working-class organizations—extinction or absorption into other movements. It ultimately followed the general rule of becoming dependent upon the assistance of wealthy citizens for the building occupied and for contributions from year to year for general expenses.<sup>3</sup>

Another provocation the working class found hard

<sup>1</sup> Shuttleworth, *Four Periods of Education*, p. 192

<sup>2</sup> Martineau, Harriet, *History of the Peace. Pictorial History of England during the Thirty Years' Peace*, 1816-1846, Vol. II, p. 89. (London, Bell, 1877-78)

<sup>3</sup> Hudson, *op cit*, p. 43.

to overlook was the determined opposition manifested by directors and honorary members to the admission of newspapers<sup>1</sup> to Institute reading-rooms. "Owing to the objections entertained by some of the influential supporters—not only were works of fiction and general literature excluded from the library, but even, it has been asserted, the admission of historical and biographical works has been constantly opposed."<sup>2</sup> As a result, the London Institute which had been organized by working mechanics and had started so auspiciously with Dr. Birbeck as director became "little more than an association of shopkeepers and their apprentices, law copyists and attorneys' clerks". A group of readers, objecting to the exclusion of controversial literature from the operatives' and artisans' Library of Nottingham, withdrew and formed a new library, keeping the books in public-houses.<sup>3</sup> Regulations calling for a majority of working men upon governing committees were so interpreted that small merchants were soon in control by means of the simple expedient of classifying themselves as "workers of fabrics".<sup>4</sup> Constant evasion of rules alienated the most loyal of working men.

To assist the Mechanics' Institute in its repressive policy, the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge undertook to temper the resentment of the workers toward the owning and governing classes by supplying them with sound economic doctrine. They advocated the suppression of independent thought by means of taxation of the working-class press<sup>5</sup> and the creation of an economic literature expressed in simple language and relieved by everyday illustrations.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90

<sup>3</sup> Dobbs, *op cit.*, p. 188, note 1.

<sup>4</sup> Hudson, *op cit.*, p. 52

<sup>5</sup> Collet, C. D., *History of the Taxes on Knowledge, passim* (London, Unwin, 1919)

<sup>6</sup> The Penny Magazine had been published for this purpose, but had not been a success. Circulation figures which looked large to the uncritical eye, proved upon examination to be based upon free adver-

For the latter work the Society found women most useful.

Read the inner history of the learned lady during the first forty years of the 19th century and you will learn that among all economic missionaries to the lower classes they were the most indefatigable. It happens that no less than three, two of whom at least achieved considerable distinction during their lives, attempted to educate the working class along safe lines. They all showed an appreciation for economic theory founded upon the Malthusian idea of the causes and control of poverty, and an active interest in interpreting it to the poor in the form of tale and tract.

Hannah More was moved by a strong religious as well as economic motive in publishing her "Cheap Repository Tracts." She carried her convictions into every relationship and was known as Mr. Garrick's chaplain. She piled precept upon precept because she had a church to sustain as well as a class to save. Mrs. Jane Marcet and Harriet Martineau, however, were journalists first and reformers when it was profitable. In their simplifications of scientific conceptions, their sense of journalistic values is more apparent than their passion for social improvement.

Mrs. Marcet's "Conversations on Political Economy in which the Elements of that Science are Familiarly Explained" was written in 1821, following a successful exposition of the laws of chemistry. There is no evidence that either of these works was the result of profound study. The author confesses that in writing on economics she had "had scarcely any other guide in this popular mode of viewing the subject than the recollec-

tisement and distribution by local committees of substantial citizens. (Dobbs, *op cit.*, p 193) When artisans, already disillusioned by the failure of the Institute to permit political discussion, read in it the tidings that, "when poverty comes (as it sometimes will) upon the provident, the industrious and the well-informed, a judicious education is all-powerful in enabling them to endure the evils it cannot always prevent," they were not inclined to subscribe

tions of the impressions she herself experienced when she first turned her attention to the subject."<sup>1</sup> Yet such was her narrative ability that the work exercised considerable influence upon the economic theory of the middle of the 19th century by helping to form the first impression of the young economists. Her purpose in helping to educate the labouring class was to render them industrious, frugal, provident, and interested enough in their future to prevent overpopulation.<sup>2</sup> And she enlarged upon the blessing of inequality of wealth on the ground that the rich and poor are necessary to each other. "It is precisely the fable of the belly and the limbs; without the rich, the poor would starve; without the poor the rich would be compelled to labour for their own sustenance."<sup>3</sup>

Harriet Martineau approached her task of enlightenment in a similar state of serene unpreparedness. Her purse was empty and the only alternative employment to authorship was fancy-work. She had to make writing pay. In 1827 she wrote a few eightpenny stories on the Nottingham riots of hosiers and lace makers in which machinery and wages were the subject matter. Later a neighbour lent her Mrs. Marcet's "Conversations." She took up the book chiefly to see what the words Political Economy meant; and "great was my surprise," she says, "to find that I had been teaching it un-awares." Then followed two and one-half years of continuous cramming on "raw masses of the dismal science," during which time Adam Smith and Ricardo were done over for the popular taste in a new dress of fancy and fiction. Or, as the author understood her method, she endeavoured to exhibit the "great natural

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, Ed by Leslie Stephens and Sidney Lee, Vol XXXVI, p 310. (London, Smith, Elder, 1885-1901)

<sup>2</sup> Marcet, Mrs Jane, *Conversations in Political Economy in which the Elements of that Science are Familiarly Explained*, by the Author of *Conversations in Chemistry*, p 167 (London, Longmans, 1821.)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p 94

laws of society by a series of pictures of selected social action."<sup>1</sup>

The first tract in her series entitled "Illustrations of Political Economy" was submitted to the Diffusion Society and rejected as dull.<sup>2</sup> Publisher after publisher refused to undertake the risk of publication. But Harriet Martineau knew the taste of her public. "The people wanted the book," she said, "and they should have it."<sup>3</sup> When finally printed, it attained instant success. Letters came from every quarter. She tells with pleasure of a friend of hers who saw the Princess Victoria at Kensington Palace come "running and skipping to show her mother the advertisement of the 'Illustrations of Taxation' and to ask leave to order them."<sup>4</sup>

Every one with a theory wanted Miss Martineau to make it popular. Half the hobbies of the House of Commons and numberless notions of individuals were commended to her for treatment. Members of Parliament astounded the village postmaster by sending down such numbers of Blue Books that they had to be taken in a wheel barrow. Mr. Hume speaking for the Society offered any price for the privilege of issuing the remainder of the series under the Society's imprint.<sup>5</sup> Brougham made the final arrangements promising to make up part of the payment out of his own pocket.<sup>6</sup> The series was not only a best seller, but one of the only two books sold<sup>7</sup> during a period distracted by political strife and an epidemic of cholera.

The influence of Brougham's thumbnail treatises and Miss Martineau's series was far-reaching. Both were industriously circulated in Mechanics' Institutes.<sup>8</sup> They filled a long-felt want for text-books more or less

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, Harriet, *Autobiography (and Memorials)*, Ed. by Maria W Chapman, Vol I, p 105 (Boston, 1877)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, Vol I, p 133

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, Vol II, p 564

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, Vol I, p 417.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, Vol I, pp 135-136

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, Vol I, p 166

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, Vol I, p 201

<sup>8</sup> Hudson, *op. cit*, p 160.

adopted to the previous educational preparation of working-class students. But although the workers were in the main ignorant men they were not so perverse or foolish as they appeared to the philosophers who wrote the "Rights of Machinery" and the other pamphlets.<sup>1</sup> The ultimate effect of their publication was unexpected. Instead of acting as a social sedative, they stimulated a working-class reaction against the Society's "Useful" Knowledge. For the spirit animating Lord Brougham, Harriet Martineau and members of the Diffusion Society was never disinterested. Each laboured in his or her own way to convince working-class readers that though it was a great misfortune to be poor, it would be a much greater one were poor men surrounded only by others as poor as themselves. Both statesman and woman journalist told the workers that "your own security, your own freedom, your own certainty of going steadily forward in the improvement of your condition, depends upon upholding the right of property."

Leaders of the Chartists and many of the rank and file therefore became critical of their betters. "Nothing can persuade us", said one group of mechanics, "but that all systems of education are false which do not teach man his political duties and rights."<sup>2</sup> They began to look more closely into the nature of their grievances and to draw comparisons between the educational objective of the technologists and the educational needs of the working class. Many feared that education might be made only another means of social oppression and were outspoken in their efforts to avoid that contingency.<sup>3</sup> Popular distrust of Brougham, and his

<sup>1</sup> Hammond, *Skilled Labourer*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Mechanics' Magazine*, Sept. 11, 1824, quoted by Dobbs, *op. cit.*, p. 176

<sup>3</sup> When the by-laws of the British and Foreign Society were drawn up years before, Francis Place (Wallas, *op. cit.*, p. 95), had insisted upon wholly omitting the words "poor" and "labouring poor" which had hitherto been employed, and took special care that there should



preaching and teaching clique became so great that even Miss Martineau,<sup>1</sup> who can never be accused of understanding the Chartist Movement, finally admitted that the surest way not to reach the people was to address them through the Diffusion Society.

### III

Three men, at this juncture, one of working-class origin and two more or less so, insisted in and out of season that the upper-class determination to repress intellectual independence need not be effective. They finally convinced the Chartists that members of the working class could outmanœuvre their political and economic superiors by educating themselves. Furthermore, they prepared a working-class answer to the current economic theory based on State protection of property right and the commonly accepted right of the owning classes to exploit their dependants.

The orthodox economists, Adam Smith, Ricardo, Bentham and James Mill in spite of their popularity among the upper classes had never had the field of formulating economic laws wholly to themselves. Other observers of economic phenomena had come to different conclusions. The first and in many ways the most important of these teachers was Robert Owen, the prophet of Utopia. At a time when the only future offered to the poor by orthodox economists was bounded

be no phrase in them which could give offence or hurt the feelings of anyone William Lovett deplored the mass of cheap literary and scientific publications which were being published with the avowed object of "diverting the minds of the working class away from politics, recognizing in it the work of educators who sought to spread their own exclusive and sectarian notions" (Lovett, William, *The Life and Struggles of William Lovett*, London, Trubner, 1876) John Doherty, cotton operative and editor of the *Voice of the People*, and the *Poor Man's Advocate*, opposed upper middle-class educational movements such as the Diffusion Society and urged the working class to acquire their own schools. (Hammond, *Village Labourer*, p 240.)

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, *op cit*, vol I, p 236

by the iron law of wages he advanced the doctrine of human perfectibility by means of increased economic well-being. He maintained that the purpose of industry was to produce men as well as food. To cure the obvious defects of the distributive system, he proposed several forms of co-operation some of which were tried out in co-operative communities<sup>1</sup>

But Owen was pre-eminently an educator. Every Owenite undertaking was permeated with plans for educational reform. He pressed his theories in this matter upon every audience. His contagious enthusiasm endeared him to all ranks of men. Furthermore, in spite of an altruistic bent, Owen's personal relationship with working men was autocratic. A devoted admirer<sup>2</sup> tells of one occasion when on being asked by a group of workers if a certain procedure was not highly despotic, he answered with the greatest composure, that it evidently was; but as the group in question was ignorant of his plans it must be content, like the working class, to be ruled by despots until it had acquired sufficient knowledge to rule itself. He was out of sympathy with the political aspirations of the Chartists and urged them to seek, as he did, an audience and support for their projects among the employing and governing class. Consequently his educational policy bore no relationship to working-class ambition. The advice he gave in the case of the Mechanics' Institute was contradictory. "Education", said he to the workers, "will fit you for participation in the co-operative commonwealth." "Let us educate the artisans," he said to his fellow industrialists who were impressed by his success as a business man, "as more effective instruments in our hands for producing profit". A

<sup>1</sup> Howell, Mark, *The Chartist Movement*, pp. 45-47. (Manchester, University Press, 1918.)

<sup>2</sup> Lovett, William, *The Life and Struggles of William Lovett in his Pursuit of Bread, Knowledge, and Freedom*, p. 49. (London, Trubner, 1876.) See also, Hammond, L. Barbara, *William Lovett, 1800-1877*. Fabian Biographical Series No. 8. (London, Fabian Society, 1922.)

talent for crude and indistinct generalization made him the expositor of education to the technologist, who worked to train factory hands as unreflecting accessories to the machine, and at the same time the inspiration of the working class in its repudiation of the Mechanics' Institute and its efforts to educate itself for political responsibility and a more abundant life.

Thomas Hodgskin<sup>1</sup> the second opponent of orthodox theory was at once more practical and more of an economist. Unlike Owen he was possessed of some training in philosophy,<sup>2</sup> a gift for reflection, critical insight and breadth of view. He was among the first to take advantage of the ambiguity of Ricardo's labour theory of value; to announce labour's claim to a larger share in the product of industry; and to express a criticism of the competitive system. He maintained that the present social organization could only be remedied by a sweeping peaceful change creating a new society within the framework of the old. Even Place<sup>3</sup> while ascribing to his views a destructiveness they probably did not deserve, admitted Hodgskin, as he never did Owen, as an intellectual antagonist worthy of his wit.

A recruit to the labour movement in England from the British Navy, Hodgskin's first constructive efforts were directed toward founding a Mechanics' Institute in London, where working men could "learn all that was really indispensable for a worker to know in chemistry, in mechanics and in the science of the production and distribution of wealth".<sup>4</sup> His interest in education was coloured by what he conceived to be the

<sup>1</sup> Hodgskin had been a naval officer during the Napoleonic Wars. At the age of 25 a dispute over discipline caused him to leave the service. His first published work (1813) was *An Essay on Naval Discipline*. After meeting Place and Bentham he toured Europe for three years on a mission of economic and social investigation. His connection with the Labour Movement began in 1823.

<sup>2</sup> Menger, Anton, *The Right to the Whole Produce of Labour*, Introduced by H S Foxwell, p 36 (London, Macmillan, 1899)

<sup>3</sup> Wallas, *op cit*, pp 267-271.

<sup>4</sup> Hodgskin, *op cit*, p. 10

task of political and economic reform, namely, the creation of a new social order. It was his opinion that the education of the people like their property would always be directed most effectively when under their own control. "It would be better", he wrote, "for men to be deprived of education than to receive their education at the hands of their masters, for education in that sense, is no better than the training of the cattle that are broken to the yoke. . . . The workers of London must proceed, like those of Glasgow, and found the new Institution at their own expense".<sup>1</sup>

Hodgskin's relation with the working class was close, sympathetic and friendly. His educational views attained easy ascendancy<sup>2</sup> over those offered by Owen. Had it not been for the opposition of Francis Place,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hodgskin, *op cit*, p 10 Hodgskin's views on Workers' Education were expressed for the most part through the Mechanics' Magazine, a periodical founded by himself and a Scot named Robertson.

<sup>2</sup> Howell, *op cit*, p 50

<sup>3</sup> Francis Place was convinced that working-class progress was to be brought about by patient, tolerant, disillusioned men (Wallas, *op cit*, p 382) Owen incurred his disapproval because of his Utopianism. He took issue with Hodgskin because, although the views of the latter were too scientific to be tinged with Owen's notions of human perfectibility, they had gained currency through Owen's co-operative societies (Menger, *op cit*, p XXXII.) Place had watched the little group to which Hodgskin belonged for a number of years; had corresponded with him, in the end had dissuaded him from writing a book which in outline is curiously like Marx's *Capital*. But as a result of long experience with the evils of state interference in the matter of the combination laws, he steadily opposed anything savouring of state socialism. (Wallas, *op cit*, p. 267) He liked Hodgskin, the man, but feared Hodgskin, the socialist.

Accordingly, when the latter proposed (*ibid.*, p 112) the establishment of the London Mechanics' Institute and planned to take a large part in the direction of its policies, Place co-operated in the plan to the extent of collecting funds and arresting the distrust of working men in the source of financial support (*ibid.*, p. 112) He arranged for the name of Jeremy Bentham to be put down as steward instead of those of "ostentatious men who have done nothing to deserve it." He tried to check the mounting suspicion of donors concerning the character of political discussion which went on screened by classes in chemistry and mechanics. But the prospect of Hodgskin's influence on the Institute was more than he could bear

he would probably have become the draftsman of the Chartist programme of education.

As it was, however, after founding the London Mechanics' Institute, Hodgskin ceased to press his ideas of working-class control, and limited his educational efforts to three courses of lectures, one in Grammar, one in Political Economy and one in the Progress of Society.<sup>1</sup>

The third and most important personality among the Chartists believing in education was William Lovett. His personal history was typical of his period and of his class.

Born, the son of a working man, in the first year of the nineteenth century in a fishing village on the coast of England, he learned to read from his grandmother. But there were no bookshops in the town and no subscribers to newspapers. The only printed matter he saw until nearly twenty years of age was the Bible, a hymn book, a few religious tracts and fragments of old magazines. In his youth he could write tolerably well and became the village letter-writer. Otherwise he was ignorant. "Of the causes of day or night, of the seasons, of the common phenomena of nature" he knew nothing. He had learned of the "sun ruling by day and the moon by night" but before necessity drove him to London he had not solved the mystery of why they ruled or in what way. In the city, after assuring himself of a precarious living as a carpenter, by no means an easy job at a time when trade rulings were strictly enforced, he attended Dr. Birbeck's classes in the London Mechanics' Institute. So great was his desire for learning that he often dined on bread and cheese in order to buy books.

It was impossible for a young man in those days not to hear of Robert Owen. In fact Lovett's early manhood was passed with other young leaders of the

<sup>1</sup> Lowenthal, Esther, *The Ricardian Socialists*, p. 63 (New York, Columbia University, 1912)

working class in that kindly but eccentric shadow. He soon left his trade to become secretary of Owen's first Co-operative Trading Association and took a prominent part in that phase of the Owenite Movement which grew so phenomenally during the early thirties. His public life was a continuous passage in a sense from the voluntary communism of Owen to the stubborn opportunism of Place, although he never at any time found himself in perfect agreement with either.

Lovett was a man of action as well as of thought. He was conspicuous throughout his life for the skill with which he could stand with his head in the clouds and his feet on the ground. Theories other men were content to discuss and dismiss he attempted again and again to test in action. The time came, therefore, when Owen's influence began to weaken. Lovett retained the old friendship, but, for purposes of the issue before the working class at the moment, ceased to be a propagandist of communistic schemes. With other Owenites he began to distrust the vague sentimentalism of their prophet. The persuasiveness of Hodgskin's more realistic economic analysis and the experience he had gained in the agitation for a free and unrestricted press convinced him that Owenite communities while admirable in conception, were impossible of realization. Personal fortune and declining interest led to a gradual severance with Owen's schemes.<sup>1</sup> Adhering to voluntary communism as an idea, he joined with his fellows in working for the franchise. Indeed, Lovett probably became, at least for a time, a Hodgskinite through listening to lectures at the Mechanics' Institute, and hearing discussions of heterodox economics at the seven co-operative conferences held between 1830 and 1834.

The intellectual excitement among the poor which characterized the Chartist period was expressed by constant dissatisfaction with the purposes of their organizations. The personnel in every case remained

<sup>1</sup> Lovett, *op cit*, *passim*.

almost the same, but there were repeated changes in name and frequent reformulations of programme. The London Co-operative Trading Association, became, in turn, the British Association for Promoting Co-operative Knowledge, the Metropolitan Trades Union, the National Union of Working Classes and Others, and the London Working-men's Association. But from the time of the organization of the First London Co-operative Association in 1829 to the last difficult days of the National Association<sup>1</sup> in 1859, Lovett, the practical politician, was in the thick of it, organizing, promoting, cheering, initiating. He was as good at picking up the scattered pieces of old organizations as he was at starting new ones. He was methodical and careful where other men were showy and artificial. He could keep minutes and audit accounts. He was the universal secretary.<sup>2</sup> But in every job, were it cabinet-making, running a coffee-house, drafting a charter, or serving a jail sentence, the education of the working class was in the immediate foreground of his mind. And with each shift away from voluntary communism toward practical politics the organizations under his influence adopted a franker and franker educational purpose.

Lovett saw his fellows as parties to a long drawn out struggle between two groups, the one sophisticated and well organized; the other, ignorant and undisciplined. He deprecated the tendency of the poor to look up to a leadership, and urged the working class to educate its own members to supplant those supplied to them by the very class whose control they sought to break. Working men were "being swayed to and fro by the idols of their choice," he said, "who taught them in their political organizations to follow great men rather than great principles."<sup>3</sup> He emphasized education as the most

<sup>1</sup> The National Association for Promoting the Social and Political Improvement of the People.

<sup>2</sup> Hovell, *op cit*, p 2

<sup>3</sup> Lovett, *op cit*, p 92

important single factor in the achievement of political liberty and was willing to support any movement which led directly or indirectly to the increase of knowledge. He recognized public-houses as valuable centres of working-class instruction especially when they contained libraries or permitted discussion groups, but he said "teetotalism leads to knowledge—knowledge leads to thinking—thinking leads to discontent with things as they are and then as a matter of course comes the Charter." To the House of Commons he said, "The best remedy for drunkenness at all times is to divert and inform the mind, and to circulate sound knowledge among the people." He perceived the need of education as a tool in the labour movement, both as reflected in his own failures and in the inadequacy of his followers. In his old age he humbly said, "The older I get, the more I find out my past deficiencies, and perceive how lamentably ignorant I am in a great variety of important subjects with which I ought to be acquainted, and to think how much more useful I might have been . . . had I had that early education which I hope, at no distant period, may be realized for the coming generation." He was a perfectionist, for whom education was the solvent of all social inequality. Even the Charter became not an end in itself but a means for training working men in political responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV

The workers' programme of education, Chartism's unique contribution to working-class development, was not the work of one day or one man. It was a growth to which many men and many organizations lent structure and inspiration. One sees Owen, benevolent aristocrat, running from group to group preaching his theories, unmindful how well they hung together; inspiring, encouraging his communities; trying out

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, *passim*



his schemes. One sees Hodgskin, incisive, cold, the match of any mind in any class; shut off by his radicalism from close contact with the working class; influencing their actions by the clearness of his ideas. One sees Place, aloof from the market place; distrustful of the moods of the workers; playing the cards of compromise behind the doors of the little library in the rear of the tailor shop. One sees Lovett discussing politics and the Charter in every group that gathered in coffee-houses and Mechanics' Institute; the loyal Owenite, the intellectual Hodgskinite, the high minded defender of moral force; the organizer of one body, the secretary of another; the indefatigable influence which put in every constitution the two phrases "we have resolved to unite," "and mutually instruct ourselves."

The first Chartist organization to profess an educational purpose was the Metropolitan Trades Union. In 1831 a few carpenters met to form an organization in which all trades might unite for the furtherance of some hazy scheme of co-operative production. Lovett, who represented the cabinet-makers, induced them to turn their attention to the engrossing problem of politics, with such success that the trade union aim and function was forgot and co-operation set aside, while they re-organized themselves under the name of the National Union of the Working Classes and Others. The National Union divided into discussion groups where political subjects, articles from the newspapers and the standard political works were read and commented upon.<sup>1</sup> The loose structure of public and coffee-house controversy was replaced by a systematic plan, somewhat like that of the Methodist connection with which Lovett and his colleagues were familiar.<sup>2</sup> Class leaders were appointed at public meetings in proportion of one for about every

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p 68

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p 68 The influence of Methodism upon the structure and purpose of working-class organization cannot be too strongly emphasized.

thirty or forty members. And after the Association had spread to different parts of the country, public meetings were held in various districts with announced speakers.

The National Union of Working Classes and Others faded away under the impact of Owen's great scheme of the Grand Consolidated Trade Union of 1833 and 1834. In June 1836<sup>1</sup> a group composed of many of the same people took the name of the London Working-men's Association,<sup>2</sup> dropping from their name the phrase "and Others" together with all it had signified. Working men had begun to want to organize by themselves and for themselves.<sup>3</sup> Lovett says of this second enterprise, "We found that we had collected together a goodly number of active and influential working men ;—the question arose amongst us whether we could maintain a union formed exclusively of this class. We were the more induced to try the experiment as the working class had not hitherto evinced that discrimination and independent spirit in the management of the political affairs which we were desirous to see. . . . We wished to establish a political school of self-instruction among them, in which they should accustom themselves to examine great social and political principles."

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p 91

<sup>2</sup> It is said that Lovett was induced to found the Association by Dr. James Black of Kentucky who had come to London in 1834 with the idea of promoting Workingmen's Educational Associations (Dobbs, *op. cit*, p 227, note 1, Lovett, *op. cit*, p 91)

<sup>3</sup> The objects of Lovett's Association were in part :

1. To draw and unite the intelligent members of the working class in one band
2. To seek equal political and social rights for all classes
3. To promote the education of the rising generation
4. To promote the mental improvement of adults by means of libraries, etc.
5. To restrict membership as far as possible to the working class, remembering, however, the "great differences of opinion as to where the line should be drawn which separates the working classes from the other positions of society."

(Picht, *op. cit*, p. 174)

In these words, Lovett stated the principle upon which independent education of working-class leadership was to be established. Unlike Hodgskin, Lovett was not opposed to co-operation with sympathetic members of the middle and upper classes. He realized that there was a great difference of opinion "as to where the line should be drawn." Their exclusion was not occasioned by distrust. But Lovett believed independent action of the workers to be one of the necessary factors in an education which seeks really to educate. "While we might be anxious," he said, "for the co-operation of good men from all classes, we should mainly rely on our own energies to effect our own freedom."

From the point of view of precision, the programme announced by the London Working-men's Association was a decided improvement upon that of the National Union of the Working Classes and Others. It recognized the presence within the ranks of the workers of at least one cleavage. In discriminating between the well and ill-equipped for leadership, it sought to establish some unity of purpose among the intelligent portions of the class. In addition, it forsook the declaration of time-worn general truths concerning labour as the source of wealth, the unnaturalness of hereditary class distinctions, and the right of every man to determine the nature of the laws under which he had to live, in favour of more explicit support for cheap and honest press, education of the rising generation, collections of statistical information appertaining to the interests of the working classes and society, establishment of libraries and publication of energetic expositions of the workers' point of view.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the serious and balanced nature of the class instruction which followed, that Place actually gave his commendation, admitting that never in his life had he heard so much sense and so little nonsense

<sup>1</sup> Lovett, *op cit*, pp 92-93.

expressed among many people at the same time. The discussion which drew forth a favourable comment from the disillusioned old man was a tri-cornered affair in which the three current forms of economic analysis were defended by their respective adherents; classical mid-century liberalism by Place himself; communism by Owen, and the "iron law" by Lovett.<sup>1</sup>

In 1840 Lovett made his third and most determined effort to commit the working class and the adherents of the Charter to a programme of political democracy based upon self-education. During a year spent in Warwick gaol for the offence of directing public attention through the press to a violation of political justice, William Lovett, cabinet-maker, and John Collins, tool-maker, wrote a book called *Chartism; a New Organization of the People, embracing a plan for the Education and Improvement of the People, Politically and Socially*.<sup>2</sup>

Although the chief object of the work was to form public opinion in favour of the Charter by establishing libraries, sending out missionaries and printing tracts, Lovett seized the opportunity to propose a broader educational plan than any former organization had contemplated. The London Working-men's Association had proposed the formation of a loosely organized "political school of self-instruction for adult working men." *Chartism; a New Organization of the People* advocated the education of the children of working men, not only for political initiative and responsibility but also for the enjoyment of a more abundant life.<sup>3</sup> It was significant as the first attempt made by a representative member of the working class to make known what that class considered the content and purpose of popular education.

Lovett proposed to divide the kingdom into districts

<sup>1</sup> Wallas, *op. cit.*, p. 360

<sup>2</sup> (London, J. Watson, 1840)

<sup>3</sup> Lovett and Collins, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

in each of which were to be erected Public Halls for use during the day as Infant Schools and during the evening for the instruction and entertainment of the industrious classes. The plan included normal, agricultural, industrial schools and circulating libraries accessible to every man, woman and child.<sup>1</sup> With scrupulous attention to detail reminiscent of Owen's educational zeal, the little book contains a design<sup>2</sup> of the front elevation and a floor plan of a model District Hall, in which each scholar's seat, the swings, flower-borders and teachers' sleeping rooms are indicated. Lovett's human sympathy and constructive imagination apprehended the incapacity of the working class to visualize the objective essentials of an educational system such as yet no man had seen. "Here you can see in this picture," he seemed to say, "what it will all look like when we are done."

Of the quality of teachers, he was equally explicit. "The first requisite . . . is a disposition to win the affection of the little beings committed to her care. Her requirements should extend . . . to a general knowledge of the human frame . . . and the best mode of preserving the child in full health and vigour. . . . She should have a clear knowledge of the human intellect and . . . aptitude for judiciously developing its perceptive, comparative and reflective powers. She should possess a knowledge of music, have a voice for singing and be able to express herself grammatically." Of class-room routine, "the opening of school should be punctually observed. The boys and girls should enter by their respective doorways, and each one, being provided with a place in the cloak-room, should be instructed to hang it under a particular number. They should then proceed to their seats in the school-room which should have corresponding numbers."<sup>3</sup>

Such specifications follow one another painstakingly for one hundred and eleven pages

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid* , p 25

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* , p. 42

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid* , *passim*.

The little book recommended also the formation of a new organization which Lovett set out to develop as soon as he recovered from the experience of imprisonment. He called it the National Association for Promoting Political and Social Improvement of the People. Its functions were those of a school board with wide social powers.<sup>1</sup> Membership was to include in one general body, persons of all creeds, classes and opinions,<sup>2</sup> who were desirous of promoting its objects. Control was "legally secured" to the working class by vesting property in the hands of elected trustees.<sup>3</sup> Branches of the Association were established throughout England. In London a model District Hall was opened.<sup>4</sup>

## V

Neither Lovett nor his colleagues however sensed the magnitude of the task they had set themselves. Always, in the last analysis, Utopian, Lovett shared Owen's "absence of a sense of time in social evolution". Furthermore, he looked upon a paper programme of action as action all but completed. He was a Knowledge Chartist, believing that group behaviour could be guided by reason rather than passion. In fact, Lovett dealt in ultimates and with those working men who supported his endeavour looked upon the franchise and all that it implied not as an end in itself but as a means of social, mental and moral improvement.

Opposition to his plan of education did not arise among the well-to-do and ruling classes. By them he was practically unnoticed. They could not distinguish between good and bad Chartists. His principal antagonists were hunger and overwork among the poor; selfish politicians among the middle class, and his own unfamiliarity with financing large enterprises.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*

<sup>4</sup> Lovett, *op. cit.*, pp 286-287.

The organization of the National Association was the signal of its founders' defeat. Lovett had drafted the charter and had given the movement its first momentum. When he launched his little book calling for a re-ordering of society it was favourably received and ran into a second stereotyped edition.<sup>1</sup> But neither he nor his immediate followers had any command over the choice of Chartist tactic. That rested with the leader who could move the crowd. For the rank and file of the movement was not composed of students and administrators. It was made up of coal miners, textile workers and other operatives with empty stomachs and tired backs. In their minds education was indissolubly connected with legal measures. During the tense years, when nothing in the English language was too strong or inflammatory for "those hard-worked, ill-fed sons of toil," recommendations to court proceedings or moral force were laughed to scorn. Lovett's plan of progress by education and moral suasion therefore was characterized as "snail-paced, shuffling, squeamish and slow." Even the patient scorn with which Francis Place regarded all leaders of the Chartists was broken to refer to Lovett when he emerged from prison with a plan for building great schools for the children of working men, as "almost crazy".<sup>2</sup>

The only people who understood the situation and knew how to take advantage of it were the Force Chartists, who were led at this late date by middle-class politicians willing to make concessions to mob psychology in order to serve their own ends. One of these, Feargus O'Connor, had already quarrelled with Lovett. He feared that the National Association and its educational programme would distract attention from his own project, the National Charter Association and a new land scheme. Accordingly the burly Irishman attacked Lovett before every audience. The loyal Chartist leader was subjected to votes of censure, and in the churches

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243

<sup>2</sup> Gammage, *op cit*, *passim*.

sermons were preached justifying anyone who would agree to assassinate him. The rank and file deserted the cause of knowledge, and as a result the proponents of physical force had noise without leadership and the cause of education had a general staff without an army.

The fate of the Chartists' programme of education from this time on was sealed. Francis Place discharged his function of official pessimist by declaring that Lovett would never be able to start even one school.<sup>1</sup> And the National Association project developed immediate difficulties.

Lovett's secretarial experience and wide reading of German and English authorities on educational methods had not trained him in financing a nation-wide enterprise. Nor was he able with his idealistic conception of democracy, to direct a social experiment through the maze of conflicting political and religious opinion of the time. "Supposing", he said, "that the million and some odd signers of the Charter Petition subscribe a shilling per quarter, their payments would produce an annual sum of two hundred pounds ! ! !" (exclamation points his own). "This amount would enable the Association to build 80 schools, establish 710 libraries, distribute 20,000 tracts, support 4 missionaries, with some surplus."<sup>2</sup> The supposition contained two weaknesses, either one of which was fatal. The first was the omission of provision for upkeep or staffing of the schools; the second, the belief that one million people would be willing to assume pecuniary responsibility over a long period of time, for a little understood enterprise. As a matter of fact the extension of the Association beyond the borders of the metropolis was found to be extremely difficult. When the money failed to arrive in small regular amounts from a large number of people, Lovett was forced to fall back upon

<sup>1</sup> West, *op cit*, p 159.

<sup>2</sup> Lovett and Collins, *op. cit*, p 45.



the undemocratic expedient of accepting a few large gifts from a small group of donors.

In addition to financial stringency the management of the London Hall soon developed serious difficulties. According to the original plan, the Hall was to be devoted to the usual lectures, public meetings and classes. Owing to enforced modification of Lovett's original plan of control, the management was vested, with the concessions usual in such cases, in the hands of those guaranteeing financial support. Independence of thought was denied by an agreement to use the Hall neither for socialist purposes nor for theological controversy. Lack of money prevented the development of most of the features, which would have made it of value to the working class.<sup>1</sup> After a few years it lost its essential working-class character and became a day school for children in which Lovett continued to teach and invent new pedagogical methods. In 1849, one year after the official death of Chartism, the minute book of the National Association was closed and the school was handed over to Lovett and his friends.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lovett, *op cit*, pp 286-88.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, *passim*. For the remainder of his life, twenty-eight years, Lovett devoted his efforts to private educational ventures. He taught children, organized new societies for the promotion of general, political and social reform, drafted addresses on such subjects as "A Higher Intellectual and Moral Standard for Members of Parliament," and wrote text-books on scientific subjects.

A visit paid to the Webb Street School of Anatomy to see the dissected head of Jeremy Bentham, led him to gather data for a text-book on physiology for school children. It was painful labour. "The first work I got hold of on the subject," he said, "was an old copy of South's Dissector's Manual . . . which puzzled me exceedingly, for of Latin I knew nothing. It at first gave me a headache and the heartache and I almost began to despair of ever understanding the subject, much less of being able to teach it."

Later he organized classes in anatomy, distributing printed lessons illustrated with diagrams of the stomach, the brain, and the lungs. "I know," he said, "that many will be found to smile, if not to sneer, at the notion of working men being taught anything of science." But confident that education was fundamental, he proceeded to issue an elementary book on astronomy, and a work on geology. Still later,

The contribution of Chartism to Workers' Education was not the creation of lasting educational institutions. Its legacy to coming generations of working men was the enunciation of a few fundamental principles and the memory of splendid working-class characters. Lovett's experience confirmed Hodgskin's theory. It became plain that workers would never get the education they needed until they provided it for themselves. With the withdrawal of working men from the Mechanics' Institute and the perception by working men of the motives underlying the efforts of such organizations as the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, an end was put to one phase of ruling class educational endeavour. From that time on, the working-class movement was never without leaders interested in the true Workers' Education. It was never without men who were determined to make education a function of the Labour movement.

It was clear, furthermore, that working-class adult education would never be universal. Under the best of circumstances, the desire for learning is not unplanted in every human heart. The attendance by working men in the class-room and lecture hall follows the same laws as the attendance by members of other classes. It depends upon fatigue, the allurements of counter attractions, individual interests and prejudices. Lovett found that more could be achieved through a small nucleus of ardent workers than through an army of the half-convinced.

Chartism established finally the connection between Workers' Education and a definite working-class philosophy and tactic. Lovett's efforts would have been

not satisfied with three adventures into foreign fields of knowledge, he wrote "Zoology for the Schools" and "The A.B.C. of Social Science in Twenty Lessons, addressed to the Working Classes by a Working Man." (*Ibid*, *passim*) His texts for children on scientific subjects were among the first of their kind and received recognition outside the working class. He anticipated Montessori in the invention of a system of movable types. (Hovell, *op. cit*, *passim*)

impossible had education for self-improvement been his only aim. But the desire of the British working class to participate in the government of their country by means of the ballot gave Lovett's educational pleas political meaning and purpose. The Chartist programme of education thus became a part of the old struggle of subject classes for political and economic emancipation, and Lovett's District Hall one step in breaking down the governing class policy of intellectual exclusion.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE UNIVERSITIES AND THE WORKING MAN

"It was made quite clear that labour divorced from scholarship would be handicapped and hindered, and that scholarship divorced from labour would become artificial and turn in upon itself "

ALBERT MANSBRIDGE

#### I

CHARTISM was a simple demand for manhood suffrage and education. Nevertheless, the collapse of the movement in 1848 left English public opinion in a very disorganized state. Although the working class had failed to reach its objective, fear had been put into the hearts of its masters. The threat of a mass meeting was enough to throw London into a panic. And in the minds of the conservative governing classes, the nation had reached a condition of disintegration in which the authority of state and church appeared to have suffered total eclipse.

By the younger men just assuming responsibility in government and commercial affairs, the general discontent among the industrious orders was ascribed to the faulty advice and awkward methods of the generation preceding them. The Adult Schools of the landed gentry, the Mechanics' Institute of the factory managers had proved unavailing. Neither had tranquilized the poor. In order to prevent further social upheaval their sons began to look about for new leaders and new methods of social control.

The interval between the new and the old was admirably filled by Thomas Carlyle. He seldom wrote a book without referring to political or social questions.

In fact, he had consecrated his ironic genius to the task of destroying the abuses which the factory system and its philosophy had imposed upon the country. He was stirred to revolt by honest sympathy with the poor. Nevertheless, he was neither democrat nor Chartist. He was interested in popularizing a notion of social responsibility centred in those naturally endowed to bear it. "My lords and gentlemen," he said, "it was you that were appointed to preside over the distribution and apportionment of the wages of work done. Beneficent nature has oftentimes had need of strong men and may, alas, again have need."<sup>1</sup> His inclination toward an aristocratic ordering of society won the confidence of older readers. His denunciations of the materialism and mediocrity of industrial society pleased the younger. All liberals, who were torn between fear for their own safety and pity for the poor, took up his challenge and organized themselves for the reassertion of authority under humanitarian patronage.

Carlyle's ideas found peculiarly congenial soil in the quadrangles of Oxford colleges where the intellectual stage was already set for a revival of interest in ecclesiastical administration and doctrine. But not all parties to this revival were concerned primarily with the social problem. Participants in the Oxford movement were more interested in the current conflict between church and state. They regarded the Chartists with horror, and when they referred to the working class at all it was to denounce all those who urged them to revolt against their superiors. Their main object was not to bring the people to the church but the church to the people. And after the conversion of Newman to Rome, the movement retreated into the sterile advocacy of medieval ritualism.

The Christian Socialists on the contrary were deeply interested in finding a Christian solution to the social problem. They regarded Christianity as a matter of

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, T, *Charism, passim*.

deed as well as faith. And although they arrived at no denunciation of private property, they were opposed to the "excesses of unregulated wealth production."<sup>1</sup> Their object was to Christianize the socialist and socialize the Christian. Unlike the members of the Oxford movement, they were determined to bring the church to the people, rather than the people to the church.<sup>2</sup>

The term "Christian Socialism" was not a new one in 1848. It had been used on former occasions by Chartist groups in more than one connection.<sup>3</sup> The first Christian Socialists, however, the young lawyers, architects, physicians, teachers and clergymen fresh from Oxford and Cambridge, who joined the movement were in no sense heirs to working-class tradition. Intellectually they were debtors to Owen and the dissenting economists, Grey, Hodgskin, Bray; spiritually they were the product of the Utopian ferment which had also produced Shelley, Wordsworth, Southey and Coleridge.<sup>4</sup> From these forerunners they learned to thunder against the mechanization of society and borrowed their ideas of co-operation. By some of them also they were sustained in their belief in the moral responsibility of the aristocrat to society. On the whole, Christian Socialism was less a system of ideas than a warm, human impulse toward social improvement deriving its inspiration from University and Church.<sup>5</sup>

The statesmen of the Christian Socialist movement and the only two men, indeed, fitted by experience and

<sup>1</sup> Beer, Max, *History of British Socialism*, Vol II, p 180. (London, Bell, 1919)

<sup>2</sup> Vulliamy, C. E., *Charles Kingsley and Christian Socialism*, p. 13. (London, Fabian Society, 1914)

<sup>3</sup> A book of that title was published by T H Hudson in 1839 to refute the atheistic doctrines of Owen. (Slosson, P. W., *The Decline of the Chartist Movement*, p 174. (N.Y., Columbia University, 1916) A few Bible Chartists signed themselves so (West, *op. cit.*, p 154)

<sup>4</sup> Beer, *op cit*, vol. I, II, *passim* See also Brailsford, H. N., *Shelley, Godwin and their Circle*.

<sup>5</sup> Woods and Kennedy, *The Settlement Horizon*, p. 8. (N Y, Russell Sage Foundation, 1922)

## WORKERS' EDUCATION: ENGLAND

onality to hold together the diverse elements of which the organization was composed, were J. M. Ludlow and Frederick Dennison Maurice. Ludlow was an Englishman and lawyer, educated in France. Before he became familiar with the socialist and co-operative enterprises in which the French working men were pioneers<sup>1</sup> He grew to understand the meaning of democracy and the value of association. "Let each man govern himself," he said, "not in solitude but in fellowship with others, and from fellowship to fellowship, from circle to circle, the privilege of the few ever learning to admit the many."<sup>2</sup>

Maurice was a clergyman and University instructor, and as a young man had taken part in a debating society of Owenite tradition.<sup>3</sup> He took from this experience small sympathy with the philosophy of its founder. But he was made uncomfortably aware, with other young men of his group and profession of the growing breach between the working and governing classes. Unlike Ludlow, however, he was not a democrat. As a follower of Carlyle, and as a witness to the profession of the lordship of the spirit over the flesh, he was a believer in the authority of the upper classes over the lower. He protested against quoting Scripture to keep the poor in order, but his views on social questions were somewhat hazy and unreal.<sup>4</sup> They were derived from fundamental religious rather than political ideas. Government was best administered, he felt certain, by men who were set apart by birth for the work.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Raven, D. E., *op. cit.*, pp 57-58

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> Seligman, E. R. A., *Robert Owen and the Christian Socialists*. vol. I, p. 218 (Political Science Quarterly, 1886)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> Raven, *op. cit.*, p. 72. His attitude toward the social question later drew forth the most contradictory comment. One contemporary described his mind as the best since Socrates. Lambert, Brooke, *Jacob's Answer to Esau's Cry*, p. 379 (Contemporary Review, Sept. 1884) Another consigned him to the rank of amiable sentimentalists, Huskin, John, *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 22, p 311 (N.Y., Wiley, 1886)

Although it was inevitable that the reforms undertaken by Ludlow, Maurice and their colleagues would sooner or later take on an educational complexion, their first experiment was one of co-operation. A number of workshops owned and operated by working men were established. Their founders hoped to demonstrate that co-operative production was not only more efficient than competitive production, but that it would also solve the social question for all time. The Christian Socialists recognized the presence of natural ability and courage among Chartist leaders. They felt that Chartism as a whole, however, had fallen into the mistake of emphasizing legislative rather than moral reform.<sup>1</sup>

They believed that co-operative enterprise would make use of working-class talent and at the same time, permeate the workers' movement with a spiritual purpose.

Of course, the co-operative workshop failed. Neither the Christian Socialists nor their protégés were fitted by education or temperament to cope with the infinite detail of production, management and salesmanship. The cause of the failure lay in the economic shortcomings of the original plan and the unsophisticated character of its advocates.

Nevertheless, the Christian Socialists were impressed by the inaptitude of the workers for conducting the enterprise than with their own lack of ability to plan it. They ascribed the downfall of the workshops to the absence of moral training and education given to the working class. They felt that the coming of the new industrial age could be assured only by supplying that type of knowledge which would remedy the defects of working class character.

This was congenial doctrine. It harmonized with all old upper-class conclusions concerning the depravity of the poor. It complied with Coleridge's admonition

<sup>1</sup> Rose, J. N., *The Rise of Democracy*, p. 114. (London, Blackie, 1912.)



that "our gentry must concern themselves in the education . . . . of their natural clients and dependants."<sup>1</sup> It conformed with one of Maurice's chief theories, namely, that God had an educational plan for the world, providing for the perfection of the individual and the race.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it did not dismiss co-operation as either a theoretical or practical impossibility. Indeed Maurice felt that in education the same principle was being carried out in a new field. "I was free to consider", he said after the workshops were abandoned, "whether there was not another opening for the assertion of the principle of co-operation. . . . A college expresses to my mind precisely the work we could undertake. . . . We could give hint of the way in which the professional and working classes might co-operate."<sup>3</sup>

The desire of Maurice to educate the working class took tangible form in the Working Men's College founded in London in 1854. His plan was not entirely original. It was a friendly plagiarism of what had already become known as the People's College movement which had developed in response to the failure of previous upper class educational enterprises to reduce illiteracy figures. For in spite of all the Adult Schools and Mechanics' Institutes could do, the state of education in England during the 40's, 50's and 60's was deplorable. In 1845, 33 per cent. of the adult men and 49 per cent. of the adult women were unable to write their names. Furthermore, attendance in the schools since 1834 had decreased rather than increased. In Manchester about 1865, of 104,000 of school age, only 55,000 were at their books. The story in other industrial cities was the same.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge, S T, *Lay Sermons* Quoted by Beer, *op. cit.*, vol. L, p 137

<sup>2</sup> Beer, *op. cit.*, vol II, p. 180.

<sup>3</sup> Raven, *op. cit.*, p 177.

<sup>4</sup> Ludlow and Jones, *op. cit.*, pp 148-149.

The first People's College founded to remedy this condition was that in Sheffield. Here the Rev. R. S. Bagley, an independent minister, who had been influenced by William Lovett's address on National Education in 1837, opened rooms in a white-washed, unfurnished, unwarmed garret. By 1848 attendance reached a maximum figure of 462 men and 104 women<sup>1</sup>. The fee was ninepence, and control, true to Chartist principles, was vested in a committee of students by whom the constitution was drafted. Nottingham People's College was established a few years later in 1846. Classes and lectures for working men were held in People's Hall. The Constitution was drafted by William Lovett.<sup>2</sup> Other colleges were opened in Norwich in 1847-1848, in Telford and Cambridge in 1855,<sup>3</sup> in Wolverhampton and Ancoats in 1857, in Liverpool in 1860, and in Leicester in 1860.<sup>4</sup>

The presence of institutions similar to his own forced Maurice to formulate and state his educational policy with greater clarity than if there had been but one of the kind. His reliance upon University affiliations was particularly emphasized. He conceived of the enterprise as a union between "labour and learning" which would assist men of the professions to acquire a new sense of their relation to the working class, and the working class<sup>5</sup> in turn, a knowledge of the conditions which had kept it weak.<sup>6</sup> The education offered was to be humane rather than technical, because the workman was "a person, not a thing, a citizen and not a slave or even a wage-earning animal." It was to be not merely a system of instruction, but a way of life

<sup>1</sup> Lovett, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> Ludlow and Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 45; Sadler, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 45. See also A E C., p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Working Men's College Magazine, Feb. 1859, p. 28 ff. Quoted Sadler, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>6</sup> Kingsley, Charles, *Alton Locke*, Prefatory Memoir by Thomas Hughes, London, pp. cxi, cxii.

shared by teachers and students. Emphasis was to be laid on the ethical rather than the practical. Accordingly, although the discussion of social and political subjects was not forbidden, emotional detachment in argument was to be encouraged.<sup>1</sup> Men were to be trained not as partisans, but as citizens.

The educational machinery of the Working Men's College was put in operation by a most unusual group of men. The first class in Bible was held by Maurice himself. After the College got under way he was joined by prominent undergraduates from Oxford and Cambridge, and other men with reputations already made, such as John Ruskin, Charles Kingsley, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and the artist C. Lowes Dickinson. Classes were conducted in the Gospel of St. John, Shakespeare, English History, Geography, Drawing, Modelling, Public Health, Arithmetic, Law and Grammar. For recreation, Thomas Hughes held sparring classes and Dr. Furnival, the distinguished philologist, led Sunday walks.

The example of these men had a far-reaching effect upon educated opinion, especially in the University. Kingsley held the chair of Modern History in Cambridge from 1860 to 1869. Maurice became Professor of Moral Philosophy in the same institution from 1866 to 1872. Ruskin taught at Oxford from 1870 to 1878 and again in 1883 and 1884. Such authority in the nation's intellectual centre greatly strengthened the appeal of the idea of cultural democracy.<sup>2</sup> Confronted by the accomplishments of the Working Men's College, the students of neither University could remain indifferent to the new field of endeavour. The following fifty years of the century were devoted to attempts by college groups either official or personal, pedagogical or religious, to bring the educational agencies of the country within reach of the poor.

<sup>1</sup> A E C, pp 24-25 Also Raven, *op. cit.*, pp 353-354.

<sup>2</sup> Wood and Kennedy, *op. cit.*, pp 14-15

The first of these attempts was made officially by the University in the form of University Extension. The idea, which included any scheme for increasing the usefulness of the college by bringing it in touch with a wider circle of students, was advocated first by Mr. William Sewell of Oxford in 1850.<sup>1</sup> But the initiative in putting the matter into practice was not taken until seventeen years later in 1867, when Mr. James Stewart, a Fellow of Trinity College, responded to an invitation of a group of ladies in the north of England to deliver some lectures. Successful in one course, others followed later for railway men in the Mechanics' Institute at Crewe and for co-operators at Rochdale. Stewart was led to consider the possibility of a "peripatetic university" for working people. In 1873 Cambridge adopted his proposal and a course of 24 lectures was arranged at the request of groups in three cities. In Nottingham, the initiative was taken by the Trades' Council.<sup>2</sup> This was followed by the organization of the London University Extension Society in 1876, and by Oxford and the other Universities soon after.

Not long after extra-mural education became a regular function of University instruction, a group of University bred clergymen, who had assumed charge of slum parishes, established what became known as College Missions. These Missions were maintained by funds solicited from University students, and undergraduates oftentimes lent personal assistance in parish work. The principle of fellowship as practised by College Missions took on an evangelical aspect. It was invoked for the purpose of converting the poor to the Church of England.

At about the same time another group composed of

<sup>1</sup> A.E.C. A pamphlet was published later by Lord Arthur Hervey, M.A., entitled, "A suggestion for Supplying the Literary, Scientific and Mechanics' Institute of Great Britain and Ireland with Lecturers from the Universities." (*Picht, op cit*, pp. 39-140)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 26-27

clergymen, but interested primarily in education, also took up their residence in East London. Among them were Edward Dennison,<sup>1</sup> John Richard Green, Edmond Holland, and Samuel A. Barnett. They worked separately and their purpose was "to do something for the poor." Green conducted religious services. Dennison founded a school in which he lectured to working men and also gave religious instruction. And Edmond Holland, among other things, was instrumental in causing the vacant living of St. Jude's in Whitechapel to be offered to Barnett.<sup>2</sup>

As vicar of St. Jude's, Mr. Barnett began to make experiments in the practice of fellowship between the masses and classes by inviting them to meet socially in the vicarage drawing-room. He considered it a religious duty to give parties.<sup>3</sup> But these affairs were not always successful. The artificiality of the situation caused the poor to behave badly. They pushed, scrambled, pocketed viands, picked flowers, and made unseemly noises. Nor was the deportment of the well-to-do on a higher plane. They, on their part, gave trouble by adopting a mincing accent, ridiculing the ways of the East Londoners, or in their efforts to be at ease in unfamiliar company affected a vulgarity they ordinarily did not display.<sup>4</sup>

The failure of the drawing-room and tea-table to bring about easy social intercourse and mutual knowledge between the extremes of society, led Barnett to seek another technique. The need of education, which had always occupied his mind, now assumed paramount importance. He secured, therefore, the intellectual and financial support of a group of teachers and students in Oxford,<sup>5</sup> bought a house, took over the College Missions

<sup>1</sup> Picht, *op cit.*, pp 9, 11

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p 23

<sup>3</sup> Barnett, H. O., *Canon Barnett, His Life, Work, and Friends*, Vol I, p 156 (London, Murray, 1919)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p 157

<sup>5</sup> Picht, *op cit.*, pp 26-28

idea of the desirability of residence by University men among the poor and opened Toynbee Hall<sup>1</sup> in 1884 as the first University Settlement.

The idea of founding a settlement of this character was not a new one. It had been proposed some years before in the circle around Ruskin,<sup>2</sup> whom Barnett had met through Octavia Hill.<sup>3</sup> The young clergyman shared with the missionaries of the College Missions a belief in the Anglican creed and the central function of religion in human life. He differed with them, however, upon the object of residence among the poor. A Mission had conversion for its object. It created organizations, institutions, machinery for that purpose. A settlement on the other hand existed, according to Canon Barnett, to interpret the University spirit to the world of industry; to relate the University to the State; to bring the Church to the people. Barnett's social philosophy was a reformulation of the thought of F. D. Maurice, when he said that the Working Men's College was established "first, for the benefit of the teachers; second, for the benefit of those whom we taught."<sup>4</sup> The Settlement aimed to secure mutual knowledge.

Barnett's educational ideal for the working class was similar to that of Ruskin. He was opposed to the extension of knowledge merely for the purpose of enabling bright boys and girls of working-class parentage to enter the professions. He was more of

<sup>1</sup> This settlement was named for a young Oxford tutor, Arnold Toynbee, who, under the influence of Jowett of University Extension fame, Thomas Hill Green, Ruskin, and Barnett, devoted a short but brilliant career to educating working men in Political Economy. (Picht, *op cit*, pp 1-29)

<sup>2</sup> Lambert, *op. cit*, pp 374, 382 It should be remembered that Ruskin's interest in social questions dates from his acquaintance with the Christian Socialists Prior to that time he was known only as an artist and critic (Raven, *op cit*, p. 353 ff)

<sup>3</sup> Maurice, C E, *Life of Octavia Hill*, *passim*. (London, Macmillan, 1913)

<sup>4</sup> Raven, *op cit*, p 354

a St. Francis than a St. Dominic and realized that knowledge might imprison the spirit as well as educate it. He hoped, therefore, to raise the general level of society, to humanize industry and cultivate personality. "I propose," he said on one occasion, "that the University provide teaching which will help workmen, as workmen, to take large views of trade, of social relations and of government."<sup>1</sup> In practice, therefore, the Christian Socialist ideal of teaching literature and the humanities was continued. But additional emphasis was placed upon instruction of a very liberal nature in politics and economics. This policy was strengthened further by close affiliation between the Settlement and official labour movement. Trade unions met in Toynbee Hall rooms and a number of great strikes were conducted from it as headquarters.

## II

In spite of youth, zeal, earnestness, social purpose, and personal integrity, however, none of those who participated in the founding of the Working Men's College, University Extension, or the University Settlement Movement lived to see those institutions carry out their programme of educating the working class. Ambition inevitably out-distanced accomplishment. It was the intention of Maurice, for instance, to establish branches of the Working Men's College in every large town in England, with at least half a dozen more in the city of London. His aim was realized to the extent of seeing twenty, some of which belonged more properly to the People's College Movement. Of these, however, none survived in their original form. Some died. Some lost their working-class identity, either by becoming the nuclei of large institutions of higher learning, or, as in the case of the London Working Men's College, by

<sup>1</sup> Barnett, *Life*, Vol II, pp 105-114. The description of Barnett's educational views was written by R. H. Tawney

succumbing in part to the inroads of the middle-class.<sup>1</sup>

When Toynbee Hall was opened, Canon Barnett hoped with the partnership of the University Extension Movement to make it the nucleus of an East End University. In a letter published in the Toynbee Journal of 1886, purporting to have been written in 1832, that vision was described as though already fulfilled. "The old Hall still stands, but around it has been built a circle of University Buildings, with dwellings for 400 students, mostly clerks and workmen . . . who usually come here at the age of seventeen and remain six years. The six-hour day leaves time enough for study, and many have laid here the foundation of literary and political glory. No one is so poor that he cannot afford the College education; the living is very simple and the food chiefly vegetarian. Forty professors and tutors belong to the University. The tutors are for the most part employed in the same factories as the students while the entire time of the professors belongs to study. The most different branches are attended to, but a course on citizenship is obligatory, and Political and Social Science stand in the first rank. Most of the positions in the offices for Statistics, Trade, and Agriculture are occupied by students of the University of East London. A little Gothic Chapel serves for the worship, every evening, of a religion of humanity, in which every one shares and in which music plays a large part. Mendelssohn is the favourite composer."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Working Men's College has always been relatively well attended. During the first term 176 were enrolled. (Raven, *op. cit.*, p. 351) But soon after it was opened, the usual invasion of clerks and other middle-class people began and the College lost its working-class character. In 1908-1909, 44.9 per cent. of the students followed manual occupations. In 1912-1913, this proportion had decreased to 37.1 per cent. (A.E.C., p. 218.) Although the College has ministered to as many as 1436 students in one year, the attendance of clerical workers has always exceeded that of the working-class.

<sup>2</sup> Picht, *op. cit.*, p. 50.



In 1888, Barnett's vision of an East End University for artisans and factory hands seemed far from extravagant. One hundred lectures were given to over 400 listeners. By 1891 two Halls had been built to house the students. One contained eighteen, the other thirty-six rooms. Each was conducted by a committee of its own. The cost of room and instruction was extremely moderate.<sup>1</sup> As year followed year, however, the enterprise began to develop signs of failure. Among the first students, teachers and clerks<sup>2</sup> had predominated but it was believed that the number of artisans would increase until they formed the majority. Instead, the number of students in 1898, regardless of occupation, began to decrease. And in 1902, twelve to fourteen years after the opening of the undertaking, attendance was so small that it was suggested that the lectures be given up altogether.

The same fate attended the efforts of the University to educate the workers. The first Extension classes were arranged with the intention of meeting the educational demand of three groups of people; first, ladies and persons at leisure; second, young men of the middle class; third, artisans.<sup>3</sup> In the beginning, it seemed as though the enthusiasm and earnestness of the working men would be the life of the movement.<sup>4</sup> One early class in Nottingham was composed of 31 men and 27 women. Among the men, four were students, five artisans, four packers, nine clerks, six factory owners, one teacher, and two unknown. Among the women seven were daughters of factory owners, two of ministers, twelve of tradesmen and six milliners.<sup>5</sup> North Cumberland miners were particularly responsive

<sup>1</sup> Barnett *Life*, pp. 51, 52

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>3</sup> Roberts, R. D., *Eighteen Years of University Extension*, p. 12 (Cambridge, University Press, 1891)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17. The Scissors Grinders of Sheffield sent all youths in the trade to the lectures on Political Economy.

<sup>5</sup> Picht, *op cit*, p. 142

to all Extension efforts.<sup>1</sup> When the University of Cambridge began its work, crowds of students streamed in. Extension became the fashion. Money was plentifully supplied and miracles were expected of the movement.<sup>2</sup> Canon Barnett built Toynbee Hall in London to form a lasting home for Extension classes. A great response was expected from working men. But it did not come. The first four classes contained four hundred students. Only twelve were manual workers.<sup>3</sup> The percentage was never satisfactorily increased.

The episode of the Working Men's College and its spiritual descendants, University Extension and the University Settlement, differed widely from the educational effort of the preceding generation. Prior to 1854 educational activity on behalf of working-class adults had been inspired by apprehension or acquisitiveness. Those responsible for founding schools seldom took active, personal interest in the students. The landed gentry had remained aloof from the Adult Schools. The manufacturers had subscribed to the upkeep of Mechanics' Institutes and considered their duty done. The Christian Socialists on the contrary brought to educational thought the idea of fellowship between teacher and pupil, between the upper and the lower orders. They believed class cleavages to be temporary variations from fundamental social unity. They were confident that this unity could be recovered by bringing the rich and the poor into close personal relationship.

But the movement for working-class education, deriving its influence from the Church and University, represented the educational wing of mid-century liberalism. Mid-century liberalism, in spite of a genuine concern for the suffering of the people, relied on middle-class rather than working-class leadership. Consequently, fellowship between labour and learning to Christian Socialists, University instructors, and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 21-73.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 149.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 49

Canon Barnett meant one thing, while fellowship between labour and learning according to leaders of the working class meant quite another.

The fundamental distrust of the judgment and intellectual capacity of the working class entertained by Maurice and his colleagues soon made itself evident in the administrative affairs of the Working Men's College. A contemporary<sup>1</sup> says, "The spirit of Mr. Maurice's disciples was free alike from condescension or assumption. They were not dogmatic, they did not insist on other persons adopting their views. You felt that it would be a pleasure to them if you could think as they did; but they made it a temporary offence in you if you did not, and treated with equality every one in which they recognized the endeavour to do that which was right according to the light he had." It was the practice of teachers to invite their students to tea and to preserve a spirit of sociability. "I would most strongly object to any interference by patrons, ecclesiastical or civil," said Maurice, ". . . I perfectly agree therefore with the Sheffield principle that the education should be paid for, and that we should not incur any expenses which the payment of the pupils will not nearly meet." On the question of control, however, Maurice and his teachers were almost a unit in opposing the principle of student self-government adopted by that College. "I would not let the pupils have the least voice in determining what we shall teach or not teach, or how we shall teach," said Maurice. "We may have social meetings with them; we may have conversations with them individually; but no education will go on if we have general tumultuous assemblies to discuss what has been done or what is to be done." "We who begin the institution must claim authority over it. . . ."<sup>2</sup> On this matter he was opposed by Furnival

<sup>1</sup> Holyoake, G. J., *The History of Co-operation in England*, p. 539. (London, Trubner, 1875)

<sup>2</sup> Sadler, *op cit*, pp 41-42.

and Ludlow.<sup>1</sup> They thought the executive body of the College should be composed of an equal number of teachers and students. Their advice was unheeded, however, for six years.

Canon Barnett, too, believed in the aristocratic control of society. While deprecating the breakdown of "the old close relationship between the rich and the poor, sending them to live and think apart," he insisted that "classes must exist."<sup>2</sup> He diverged, however, from the Christian Socialist practice in the matter of educational administration. The direction of instruction lay in the hands of a committee in which the principle of workers' representation was recognized although probably not put into actual continuous practice. In the conduct of University Extension, working-class students, of course, had no voice.

### III

The second half of the century was a period of great expansion, not only in popular education,<sup>3</sup> but also in labour organization.<sup>4</sup> The movement for working-class education deriving its inspiration from the University and the Churches came in conflict, therefore, with an impulse which represented the intellectual side of an industrial movement. The workers were no longer helpless as they had been when denied a voice on the governing committees of the Mechanics' Institute.

<sup>1</sup> Furnival's actions were out of harmony in some respects with Maurice's views and feelings. He would have liked to treat every man as an equal and a friend. He was in favour of allowing beer at College suppers. Yet, even he was not without a subconscious feeling of superiority, and felt that his job had been well done when one of his students imitated in his own quarters the decorations of a "gentleman's" room (Paul, E and C., *Proletcult*, pp. 37-38. London, Parsons, 1921.)

<sup>2</sup> Barnett, S A., *Toward Social Reform*, pp 26-27 (London, Macmillan, 1909.)

<sup>3</sup> In 1876 elementary education was made compulsory, in 1899, the minimum age of leaving school was raised to 9 years.

<sup>4</sup> Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 392-393

Withdrawal of attendance was not then the only means of criticism. They were in a position to organize their own educational enterprises on a small, but vigorous scale. This educational independence was due not only to experience gained in Mutual Improvement Societies, Chartist clubs and other organizations for self-instruction of a somewhat ephemeral character, but also to the more robust experiments in self-education which began after many of the workers despaired of relief through Chartist agitation.

Post-Chartist educational experiments for working men took the complexion of post-Chartist working-class aspirations. The heroic period of the movement had come to an end. Revolutionary emotion had died down. With a certain sober resignation, working men adopted the policy of making the best of every opportunity, however indirect. While upper-class educators gave full publicity to every educational triumph, the workers contented themselves with modest, unheralded efforts. These were often scattered. They frequently were short-lived. They usually possessed but one common administrative characteristic — the desire, namely, to keep free of Church, philanthropic or University domination. The educational initiative among the workers after the failure of Lovett's ambitious proposals, shifted from political sources to economic. And of these the organizations of consumers seemed for a time to possess a more practical grasp of the needs of education than those of producers.

Co-operation by consumers was a familiar means to the English of overcoming distributive and other economic difficulties. It was nearly always associated with some form of education. As early as 1696, John Bellars, a member of the Society of Friends, proposed the establishment of a co-operative community called a "College of Industry," in which the education of children was provided for.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Holyoake, G. J., *op cit*, pp 19-22.

Robert Owen repeatedly emphasized the need of education at the Congresses of 1830 to 1835. Several groups of co-operators organized schools during that period. "We had among us in Manchester," wrote Lloyd Jones in his *Life of Owen*, "life and energy, united to an active system of teaching. We possessed a number of men who proved their fitness to teach." These men were utilized in a school which occupied an old co-operative store in Salford in 1831. "We had counters and shelves and a few tables and chairs, so we took a couple of large rooms and opened a school for the instruction of boys and girls and such adults as might think it worth while to learn what we had to teach." A house-to-house canvas drew pupils of all ages (12 to 40), who were taught drawing, music, singing, dancing and the three R's. There were no fees. The school continued for six years and included Sunday meetings, with essays and lectures on social questions.<sup>1</sup> The members of the Brighton Co-operative Society, founded in 1827, spent their leisure in reading and mutual instruction, and appointed one of their members librarian and schoolmaster.<sup>2</sup> A group of stocking-frame weavers in Sutton-in-Ashfield (Notts) devoted a portion of their funds to renting a room "to the purpose of a school, lecture room, etc."<sup>3</sup> In 1835 after the collapse of the Grand Consolidated Trade Union, the followers of Owen organized a propagandist society known as the "Rational Religionists." They divided the kingdom into districts and dispatched social missionaries to lecture and hold discussions. In some towns "halls of science were erected where a form of service was held. Many of the branches opened schools for young and old. They preached education as the basis of all reform."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jones, Lloyd, *Life of Owen*, quoted by Dobbs, *op. cit.*, p. 271, Note 2.

<sup>2</sup> Dobbs, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

<sup>3</sup> Podmore, *op. cit.*, p. 449.

<sup>4</sup> Dobbs, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

It was in Rochdale, however, that co-operation first achieved success and that co-operative education became a fundamental tenet of the Movement. Here in the forties twenty-eight men known as the "Equitable Pioneers," mostly weavers, cobblers, and wool-sorters, opened a grocery store for themselves with only incidental sales to the public. They began business with a tiny stock of flour, butter, sugar, and oatmeal. They sold at the market price and divided the surplus profit over cost at the end of the year.

These co-operative weavers soon realized the necessity for a technical and general knowledge of the economic environment were they to succeed in their enterprise. Furthermore, they were members of the unitarian Methodist chapel,<sup>1</sup> a sect whose interest in education exceeded that of any other. Even their hymns gave thanks for knowledge.

"The youthful crowds of labouring poor,  
To early toil confined,  
Here find in learning ample store  
Improvement for the mind.

Their kind instructors freely toil  
And give them willing aid,  
But blest with heaven's approving smile  
Their pains are well repaid"<sup>2</sup>

It was to their Sunday School that the adult poor had flocked in numbers too great to be cared for.<sup>3</sup>

In 1844,<sup>4</sup> they declared it to be their object "to arrange the powers of production, distribution, education, and government," and the store soon became an educational centre, where religion and politics, "the terrors of Mechanics' Institutes," were here common

<sup>1</sup> McLachlan, *op cit*, p 114 The shift of the working class in this locality to Unitarianism occurred as the result of the "plight of respectability," suffered by Methodism during the Chartist period.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp 110-111

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p 106.

<sup>4</sup> Holyoake, G J, *History of Co-operation in Rochdale*, p 11. (London, Holyoake, about 1857)

subjects of discussion.<sup>1</sup> A few years later 2½ per cent. of the quarterly profits, assigned for division among the members, was set aside for an educational fund and the mental improvement of the membership began with the establishment of a reading-room, library, and a school for young people.<sup>2</sup>

The educational theory of the Pioneers was derived from the Owenite conviction that given appropriate conditions, human nature could be modified almost indefinitely for the better. They realized that success in the undertaking was as much a matter of spirit as organization. They determined, therefore, to develop co-operative character by using the business profits of the stores for the purposes of instruction.<sup>3</sup> The end to be attained was no less than the creation of a new society.

After 1860, the movement passed out of the experimental stage. It became a practical economic success. In 1882 Arnold Toynbee warned the co-operators of the danger of overlapping on the expanding educational function of church and state and urged them to concentrate instruction in fields of knowledge neglected by other agencies. "What part of education is left for co-operators to appropriate?" he asked. "The answer I would give is the education of the citizen."<sup>4</sup>

The spiritual enthusiasm left unchoked by material achievement of co-operation was successfully destroyed by this limited conception of the part to be played by education in working-class emancipation. Since the eighties the educational objective of the movement has shifted from Owen's idealistic purpose to the more or less humdrum detail of training employees for co-operative enterprises or, at most, reformers within the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>3</sup> *Oxford and Working-class Education*, p. 4

<sup>4</sup> Toynbee, Arnold, *Education of Co-operators* (Manchester, Co-operative Union Limited)



existing order.<sup>1</sup> Co-operators have become co-operator-conscious,<sup>2</sup> not class-conscious.<sup>3</sup>

The collapse of Chartism extinguished the political ambitions of working-class producers' organizations for a time. The trade unions shook themselves free of Utopian aspirations. The impractical "universalism" of Chartist leaders was replaced by the adoption of the principle of the protection of the vested interest of the craftsman in his craft.<sup>4</sup> New methods of organization were introduced. New leaders assumed control.

The new trade unionism did not repudiate education. On the contrary its officials in their efforts to obtain legal and social protection for labour continually reiterated its necessity. Yet, few organizations went further than passing resolutions. Financial and administrative reform was too pressing.

The only exception to this rule occurred among

<sup>1</sup> Stanton, George, *The Co-operative Movement and Education*, p. 374 (London, W E A Handbook, 1918)

<sup>2</sup> Paul, *op. cit.*, pp 44-45.

<sup>3</sup> The educational aims of the co-operative movement were summarized in 1917 as (1) the training of experts, whether they be managers or assistants, in the principles and methods of the movement, (2) the provision of a liberal education for adult members in a co-operative atmosphere; (3) the development of the co-operative spirit (this last being the most important) These aims are carried out in classes organized by the movement itself, by co-operation with the W E A. and the Tutorial system, with Ruskin College and other educational movements for working men In 1913-1914 a total of 21,953 students were enrolled. (A.E.C., pp 236-237.) The actual educational programme is in closer conformity, however, with the ideals of business enterprise than with the social objectives of the contemporary labour movement No society has had the courage to put the pioneer rate of two and one-half (2½) per cent into practice. The annual total devoted to education is something less than 1 per cent (Gide, Charles N, *Consumers' Co-operative Societies*, p 69 London University, 1921) Emphasis in class instruction falls upon vocational subjects, such as book-keeping, salesmanship, or store management And a certain amount of dissatisfaction is expressed by a group of co-operators on account of the adherence of instructors to the theories of orthodox economics. (Paul, *op. cit.*, pp 44-45) A Co-operative College established in Manchester in 1919 may direct the educational movement into more idealistic channels. (*The Independent*, August 30, 1919, p. 279)

<sup>4</sup> Webb, *op. cit.*, p 179

the coal miners who began to formulate and carry out an educational programme at a very early date. During the first quarter of the century these workers were among the most depressed, poorly paid, and miserably treated in all British industry. Civilizing influences were totally absent in their villages. In fact, Hannah More's references to dwellers in Mendip as savages, were not entirely exaggerated although she overlooked economic exploitation as a cause. Their communities were ignored by statesmen and given up as hopeless by philanthropists.

The earliest form of instruction among the miners was determined by religious and economic conditions. The first word of assistance brought to their villages was carried by preachers of the Primitive Methodist Church who were themselves workers and wage earners. These men found time before and after working hours to go from village to village with their message. On some occasions it was said by a contemporary religious journal "that for want of time to wash themselves, they are constrained to come 'black' to the preaching. . . . And when the Lord warms their hearts with His dying love . . . the large and silent tears rolling down their black, black cheeks and leaving the white streaks behind comprehensively portray what their hearts feel." They took the lead in all movements for the improvement of conditions surrounding the lives of their parishioners. Circles of Methodists in quiet hamlets studied the "Age of Reason" and the "Rights of Man."<sup>1</sup> They were especially interested in adult education,<sup>2</sup> and introduced the Methodist system of Sunday and Adult Schools.

With Methodism came trade unionism, and with trade unionism the struggle for just weight at the pit's mouth. In 1860 a law was passed permitting the miners

<sup>1</sup> Dobbs, *op cit*, pp. 48, 73, 120.

<sup>2</sup> Webb, Sidney, *The Story of the Durham Miners*, 1662-1921, pp. 16-24. (London, Labour Publishing Company, Ltd., 1921.)

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in each pit to elect a check-weighman from among the persons employed in the colliery. It naturally became the practice for the men to elect one of their own number. These representatives of the miners on the weighing stand were required to be regular in habit, accurate, and business-like in mind, quick at figures, and insensible to the bullyings or blandishments of either management or fellow employees.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, a better system of instruction had to be devised.

In the seventies Student Associations were formed in some mining localities similar to the Mutual Improvement Societies of early industrial towns. In these, some member was appointed to introduce a subject by reading a paper, lecture, or book. Discussion followed. When every point was mastered by every man, new subjects were introduced.<sup>2</sup> In 1879, University Extension lectures on Political Economy were held in Newcastle and other mining towns. The interest of the miners was enthusiastic. Thirteen hundred attended. They formed a committee which made a repetition of the course possible.<sup>3</sup> In the eighties, the Northumberland Miners' Union asked their organization to grant financial support to the movement, saying in part, "the greatest battle in which your class has been engaged is yet to be fought . . . the battle against intellectual darkness. The attention and consideration which your grievances receive from the public and the legislature depends upon the ability with which you plead your case through the newspapers and on the public platform. The amount of wages you receive depends on the ability of those who represent you in the arbitration court or on the sliding scale committee. Thus your very wage questions are really educational ones. If you do not want this higher education, surely you will

<sup>1</sup> Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p 306.

<sup>2</sup> Picht, *op cit*, pp 164-165.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p 163 The miners were practically the only group of workers among whom University Extension was successful

aid in educating the men in whose brains your wages and your position in the estimation of the public and the legislature depends.”<sup>1</sup>

The strongest expression of educational initiative among members of the working class was made during the opening years of the twentieth century, when Ruskin College and the Workers' Educational Association were established. The founders of both of those enterprises went back to Maurice and Ruskin for their inspiration. They leaned heavily upon the equipment and teaching staff of the University. But enough had been done by working men in co-operative and trade union circles to warn them of the dangers of educational action divorced from the official labour movement. Both accordingly, at the very beginning provided for some form of co-operative trade union regulation with the trade unions and other working-class organizations.

Ruskin College, the first embodiment of the new

<sup>1</sup> Picht, *op. cit.*, p. 169. One of the most recent indications of the interest of miners in education occurred in the North Staffordshire Coal Field which lies near the "Five Towns" pottery district. Here in 1911 one W.E.A. class existed. In 1919 there were 23 with an enrolment of 510 students (*Adult Education Committee*, p. 296. See also, the W.E.A., *Education Year Book*, 1918, pp. 386, 387.) The work was started by Mr. R. H. Tawney. The demand for instruction, however, outstripped the supply of tutors with University training and old tutorial class students volunteered their services. Their occupations by which they earned their livelihood are interesting. In 1916 a group of 15 teachers included a collier, labourer, a potter's decorator, a miner, a basket-maker, a colliery weighman, a colliery clerk, a potter's lithographer, and a potter's thrower, as well as several others who followed clerical trades. Of these eight had been teaching in the movement for eight years and thirteen for seven (*Ibid.*, p. 299.) Three-quarters of the students are miners. (*Ibid.*, p. 300.) And of the two hundred who attended the first session of the classes in 1911-1912, forty are still in attendance in 1918-1919, having completed eight continuous years of study. (*Ibid.*, p. 307.) The movement was initiated by the W.E.A. and continues to be affiliated with that organization (*Ibid.*, p. 305.)

As a result of these educational labours more coal miners are qualified for technical appointments and the brain-working professions than any other group of manual labourers. And more of them are to be found in Parliament. (Hodgen, M. T., *The Fitness of British Labour to Rule*, pp. 1098-1118. The Forum, January 1923.)

spirit, was established under rather unusual and un-English circumstances in the town of Oxford. In the month of February 1899, three American admirers of John Ruskin,<sup>1</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Walter Vrooman,<sup>2</sup> and Professor C. A. Beard decided to organize a residential educational institution in which working-class students might study and live together. Although never a constituent part of the University, it drew upon the University faculty to some extent for instructors.<sup>3</sup>

Speaking of the purpose of the college at the inaugural meeting, Mr. Vrooman said, "We shall take men who have been merely condemning our institutions, and will teach them how, instead, to transform those institutions so that in place of talking against the world, they will begin methodically and scientifically to possess the world, to refashion it, and to co-operate with the power behind evolution in making it the joyous abode of, if not a perfected humanity, at least a humanity earnestly and rationally striving toward perfection."<sup>4</sup>

To this quasi-revolutionary statement Mr. Vrooman added the conviction that the future of working men was bound up with the future of the working class. Hence "students were to be taught . . . to regard education . . . not as a means of personal advancement, but as a trust for the good of others."<sup>5</sup> They were to be trained "in subjects essential to working-class leadership,"<sup>6</sup> they were to raise, not rise out of their class.<sup>7</sup>

At first Ruskin College was practically owned by

<sup>1</sup> Paul, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Picht, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> Pamphlet, *The Burning Question of Education*, p. 3 (Oxford. Fox, Sons and Co.)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Dobbs, *op. cit.*, p. 243, Note 1.

<sup>6</sup> A.E.C., p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> *Oxford and Working-Class Education*, p. 8. According to a later statement the aim of the college "is to make men and educate citizens." (The Ruskin Review, January 1921, p. 1)

Mr. Vrooman. He, himself, selected the students.<sup>1</sup> The first class numbered twelve.<sup>2</sup> They included engineers, miners, weavers, railway men, and representatives of other trades.

After a short interval the founders returned to America, withdrawing their support. Ruskin College had then to appeal to labour and charitably disposed individuals for support. In 1907 the Trade Union Congress issued an appeal to constituent unions. "The time has now come," it read, "for the Labour Movement itself to take the College in hand and make it an assured success. . . . There can be, therefore, no better investment for our money."<sup>3</sup> As a result, several unions subscribed regular sums for upkeep and scholarships.<sup>4</sup>

Four years after the founding of Ruskin College, another attempt was made to found an educational enterprise in harmony with the spirit of independence abroad in the labour movement. This attempt was of less alien origin than the immediate predecessor. In fact, the Workers' Educational Association is a modern expression of the humanitarian tradition of England. It is connected by ties of consanguinity with every preceding effort for working-class education initiated

<sup>1</sup> A E C, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Oxford and Working-Class Education*, p. 9. Some confusion seems to exist concerning the number of students who reached Ruskin College. Another authority states that 500 passed through in the first twenty years (A E C, p. 75)

<sup>3</sup> Pamphlets, *The Burning Question*, p. 3 *What Does Education Mean to the Workers?* p. 9. (Oxford: Fox, Sons and Co., 1917.)

<sup>4</sup> Amalgamated Society of Engineers raised the annual sum of £2000 and sent six scholars; Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, £300, and two scholarships; Northern Counties Weavers' Association, £90, and three scholarships; Amalgamated Union of Co-operative Employees, one scholarship; subscription from London Society of Compositors; Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society. (*Oxford and Working-Class Education*, p. 9.) It is now supported by more than 100 working-class bodies. (W.E.A. Handbook, p. 388) Owing to the difficulties of providing the requisite income of £4000 a year an additional appeal was recently made (about 1921) to the public for an endowment fund of £76,000. (Paul, *op. cit.*, p. 48.)



in the nineteenth century. It represents the most recent and the most successful effort of the governing classes through the Universities to raise the intellectual level of labour.

Albert Mansbridge, a young clerk in a co-operative store near Toynbee Hall, was well prepared to launch such an experiment. He was raised in a working-class family and knew the problem of education from that angle. He had assisted in the work of Toynbee Hall. He was a clerk in a co-operative store and had led classes of fellow employees in the history and principles of co-operation. He had taught in the Higher Commercial Schools of the London Board. He was familiar with Arnold Toynbee's theory of working-class education as expounded in the address of Co-operators in 1882, and still regarded it as fundamental. He agreed with Toynbee that the educational task of the working class was to train themselves for the complicated duties of modern citizenship. Furthermore, his experience as an instructor in the Co-operative Movement had convinced him that the teaching of Economics, Industrial History, and Citizenship could be carried on much more effectively in affiliation with University Extension,<sup>1</sup> than in isolation. For although he was well aware of the past failure of the Universities to capture the loyalty and imagination of working-class students, he felt certain a way could be found to remedy the situation. He believed scholarship divorced from labour to be artificial and ingrowing, and labour divorced from scholarship to be handicapped and hindered.<sup>2</sup>

After publishing two articles in the University Extension Journal expounding this theory he summoned assistance to the task of perfecting an organization. With the help of Dr. Holland Rose and a group of

<sup>1</sup> Mansbridge, Albert, *An Adventure in Working-Class Education, Being the story of the WEA*, pp 10-11 (London, Longmans, 1920)

<sup>2</sup> Mansbridge, Albert, *The Workers' Educational Association*, p 353 (International Labour Review, Sept 1922)

working men, who were accustomed to meet at his home as the "Christian Economic Society," Mansbridge and his wife took action by becoming the first members of an "Association to Promote the Higher Education of Working Men." On July 14, 1903, a small temporary committee began work. A few weeks later it was succeeded by a larger and permanent one. The Association immediately received public recognition from nearly all the Universities and a large number of labour organizations.<sup>1</sup> The name was changed three years later to the Workers' Educational Association.<sup>2</sup>

"At this time," says Mr. Mansbridge, "the objectives of the promoters were altogether vague. This was the chief criticism passed upon it, but, if any attempt had been made to be definite, no real results would have ensued. It was better to bring scholars and working men regularly and see what resulted from this than to attempt to predict the results beforehand. No one knew what was going to happen to the Association."

In fact, during the first year, very little did happen. At the beginning of the second year, however, a working printer was instrumental in establishing a pioneer local branch in Reading. After this, branches spread with great rapidity. In Rochdale, an organization of over one hundred affiliated bodies was soon created.<sup>3</sup> By 1906 branches had been formed in eight towns. By 1907 records of 47 branches were presented, and in the same year the epoch-making report—*Oxford and Working-Class Education: Being the report of a Joint Committee of University and Working-Class Representatives in the Relation of the University to the Higher Education of*

<sup>1</sup> Mansbridge, *An Adventure*, pp 11-13.

<sup>2</sup> Riboud, C., *L'Éducation Cwique des ouvriers en Angleterre · La W E A et la réforme d'Oxford*, Vol. XXV, pp 324-343. (Paris, Annales des Sciences Politiques, 1910)

<sup>3</sup> Mansbridge, Albert, *The Workers' Educational Association*, p 357

*Work people*<sup>1</sup>—was published. From that time on growth was continuous.<sup>2</sup>

Class work in the W.E.A. is conducted on what is known as the tutorial system. Each class is composed of 25 to 30 men and women who have pledged themselves to attend two hours each week, during twenty-four weeks a year for three years. The first hour is devoted to a lecture, the second, to discussion. Every fortnight an essay is written by each student. Affiliation with the University occurs in the administration of tutorial classes. Local management is in the hands of the students themselves. But the central administration is located in a Joint Committee consisting of an equal number of representatives from the University and working class organizations.<sup>3</sup>

W.E.A. classes are partially supported by grants from University funds, the Board of Education and the local education authorities. For the costs of instruction not so covered and the cost of other activities such as propaganda, organization, and administration, the Association is required to depend on voluntary sources,<sup>4</sup> and the fees of organizations affiliated to it. The Co-operative Union recently<sup>5</sup> made a donation of £100, the Universities<sup>6</sup> about £5000, the Educational Fund £100 annually.<sup>7</sup>

"The Association is open . . . to every person and to every institution interested in the development of the education of working people. It has never been in any

<sup>1</sup> (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1909)

<sup>2</sup> Membership which numbered 2612 in 1906 increased to 24,229 in 1921. Branches increased in the same period from 13 to 3163. Two tutorial classes in 1907 became 293 in 1921. Tutorial class students, registered for three years' continuous work, increased in the same period from 60 to 6820. (A.E.C., *passim*)

<sup>3</sup> A.E.C., p. 158.

<sup>4</sup> *Adult Education and the Trade Unionist*, p. 35. See also A.E.C., pp 217, 322, 323

<sup>5</sup> About 1919. (A.E.C., p. 48)

<sup>6</sup> Estimate for 1918-1919 (A.E.C., p. 48)

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239

sense a 'class' movement, but it was recognized from the outset . . . that if the proportion of working men and women in the Association fell below . . . 75 per cent., the Association would not only become vitiated but scholars would cease to take an interest in it."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mansbridge, Albert, *The Workers' Educational Association*, p. 339.

## CHAPTER VII

### WORKERS' EDUCATION AND WORKING CLASS CONTROL

When Labour strikes, it says to its Master  
I shall no longer work at your command.

When Labour organizes a party of its own, it says :  
I shall no longer vote at your command

When Labour creates its own schools, it says  
I shall no longer think at your command

HENRI DE MAN

#### I

THE characteristic feature of English adult working-class education in the Nineteenth Century was the centralization of administrative control in the hands of upper class persons and institutions. The Adult Schools, for example, were usually maintained and managed by the landed or pious gentry ; the Mechanics' Institute by the manufacturers and their friends in the government ; the Working Men's College, University Extension and the Social Settlement by clergymen, welfare workers and educators. Members of the working class were welcome to the class-room, but not to the council chamber. The programme of their instruction and the goal of their education were drawn up and determined by the vote of their betters.

For many years the workers seemed to regard this division of the educational function as normal and legitimate. Occasionally dissatisfaction with the curriculum offered by employers and patrons was displayed by withdrawals from attendance. Groups of working men sometimes organized their own study circles and English manufacturing towns were full of little Mutual

Improvement Societies. The Chartists, of course, were responsible for a comprehensive programme of education on a national scale. The organized working-class movement, however, was surprisingly indifferent to the relationship between education and the progress of labour. The trade unions as such seldom took an interest in the intellectual development of their members. Three or four in the forties established libraries and Improvement Societies.<sup>1</sup> But these were isolated incidents of trade union educational activity. They did not represent the movement as a whole. The movement for Workers' Education went on for almost one hundred years without union sympathy or official co-operation.

The belated appearance of independent working-class educational activity was due in general to two causes, one of which was external, and the other internal. Prior to the nineties repressive legislation had created an environment antagonistic to collective action. Trade Unions had no legal security. The combination laws were followed by the doctrine of criminal conspiracy; the doctrine of criminal conspiracy by a long series of adverse judicial decisions. The elementary business of self-preservation took precedence over the increase of power, and working men were more interested in maintaining the bond of union in their organizations than in expanding knowledge.

Then, too, the structure of working men's organizations in the early days was extremely simple. They

<sup>1</sup> In 1842, the Journeymen Steam Engine and Machine Makers' Friendly Society established a Mutual Improvement Society in Manchester; in 1845 the Glasgow Branch of the Scottish United Operative Masons formed a class for mutual instruction, and an association for moral, physical, and intellectual improvement. In 1848, two libraries were assembled by trade unionists (A.E.C., p. 20), and in 1850 the Flint Glass Makers' Magazine urged "the education of every man in our trade beginning at the oldest and coming down to the youngest . . . If you do not wish to stand as you are and suffer more oppression we say to you, 'Get knowledge, and in getting knowledge you get power' . . . Get intelligence instead of alcohol: it is sweeter and more lasting" (Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 199)

were free alike from permanently differentiated officials, executive councils, or representative assemblies. The president was often chosen for a single meeting or by rotation. The business transacted concerned the immediate affairs of a local group.<sup>1</sup> If a man could read and cipher he could hold any office and meet the customary emergencies.

Later, when the unions became more complex and their business had been turned over to more or less permanent officials, education for adult working men was still left in the hands of their superiors because prominent trade unionists of the seventies and eighties were converts to middle-class economic individualism. Laissez-faire was their political and social creed.<sup>2</sup> They were, consequently, more or less in sympathy with the intellectual object of the Churches and Universities, and contented themselves with educational enterprises conducted under upper-class direction and management.

With the approach of the Twentieth Century the indifference of organized labour to education began to disappear. The enactment of a compulsory education law in 1876<sup>3</sup> contributed to the formation of a new point of view, and the recrudescence in the eighties and nineties of revolutionary Utopianism similar to the Owenism fifty years before stimulated thought on intellectual questions. The efforts of the most capable leaders within and without the movement were then devoted to impregnating society with the doctrines of socialism.<sup>4</sup> The struggle with employers, furthermore, had begun in dead earnest, and it was no longer possible for the work of a union to be conducted by an ordinary artisan.

It became necessary to set aside first one man, later

<sup>1</sup> Webb, *Industrial Democracy*, pp 3, 5, 8

<sup>2</sup> Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp 354, 360

<sup>3</sup> A E C, pp 50-51.

<sup>4</sup> Webb, *op. cit.*, pp 361, 395-396, 400

many men to perform clerical and administrative duties. Some preliminary office training became almost indispensable. Trade union leadership was seen to involve not only a loyal belief in the elementary principles of democracy, and an understanding of the virtues and faults of majority rule. Officials were required also to be tactful in negotiation and astute in drawing up agreements. Trade union activity no longer stopped with the general meeting. The assumption of such enterprises as insurance, clerical service, publicity, and merchandising introduced membership and officials to new problems, and the need for additional skill. The task which trade unionists set themselves demanded constant amendment of aim and policy, and the consideration of questions stretching far beyond the boundaries of particular organizations. Their officials required not only a wide range of technical,<sup>1</sup> industrial, political, and economic knowledge, but a critical attitude toward the economic system. The broader the philosophy of the movement, the more the need and demand for education.

This change in conditions laid the foundation of a separate governing class within the unions. It also put the system of educational administration squarely before the working class world. Was it advisable, working men began to ask themselves, to send the future executives of labour to schools organized to train the future executives of capitalism? Could they expect institutions which taught the master-class the art of

<sup>1</sup> The cotton weavers illustrate the tendencies of specialization. In 1861 as a result of increase in clerical and administrative duties candidates for the office of general secretary were subjected to a competitive examination. The practice was later adopted by the Cotton Spinners and has now become the regular way of selecting all officials who concern themselves with intricate trade calculations. These examinations test the ability of candidates in the technical operation of setting piece-rates. They also determine their understanding of the function of trade unionism. The "born orator" is excluded in favour of keen, alert-minded officials, a combination, in trade union terms, of a lawyer and an accountant.



government, to instruct the working class in the means of freedom?

The principle of working-class control of Workers' Education was clearly established early in the history of the movement. It appeared in the Chartist educational programme. Even the Christian Socialists and Canon Barnett believed in the representation of working men, and included a few on governing committees in Little Ormond Yard and Toynbee Hall.<sup>1</sup>

The founders of Ruskin College and the W.E.A. chose, however, to follow their predecessors in the Working Men's College and the Settlement Movement rather than those of Hodgskin and Mr. Vrooman, appointed a minority of trade unionists to the first Ruskin College board of control,<sup>2</sup> and Mr. Mansbridge, in spite of an initial effort<sup>3</sup> to give the working class a controlling voice in the W.E.A., finally succumbed to University influence.

## II

The W.E.A., at present, is an organization consisting not only of working-class bodies but educational organizations and individual members. Its unit is the branch. The branch, in turn, is composed of affiliated societies, trade unions, adult schools, co-operative bodies, working men's clubs, and educational organizations, and individuals. The control of the branch is in the hands of a council which is representative of each affiliated society. Branches are grouped in districts

<sup>1</sup> Six years after it was established the Working Men's College admitted two (Sadler, *op cit*, p. 42) This number was later increased. (A.E.C., p. 218) At Toynbee Hall students were allowed four or more representatives in a governing board of sixteen (Picht, *op. cit.*, p. 16.)

<sup>2</sup> Pamphlet, *What Does Education Mean to the Workers?* p. 7

<sup>3</sup> The first committee to join with Mr Mansbridge in founding the W.E.A. was composed entirely of working men who were either trade unionists or co-operators. They were Mr A. H. Thomas, a brush-maker; Mr. George Alcock, a trustee of the National Union of Railwaymen; Mr. W. R. Salter, an engineer, Mr L. Idle, Mr J. W. Cole, and Mr. Mansbridge, co-operative employees. (Mansbridge, *An Adventure*.)

with district representative councils. Districts, in turn, are represented in the Central Council, the national body of the Association, together with representatives of other national bodies. The national organizations affiliated with the W.E.A. include a number of Trade Unions, the Parliamentary Committee of the trade union groups, the Co-operative Union, the Education Committee of the National Adult School Union, the Working Men's Club, and Institute Union, the Y.M.C.A., universities, and other educational bodies.<sup>1</sup>

This scheme of organization does not definitely provide for a majority representation of trade unions. Trade union representatives in the Central Council outnumber the representatives of any other single group of non-trade-union organizations, but they are in their turn outnumbered by the sum-total of possible non-trade unionists.<sup>2</sup> The constitution requires that the Joint Committees conducting the Tutorial class system consist of an equal number of representatives from the University and working-class organizations. The number of labour representatives on these committees has been constantly increasing,<sup>3</sup> but the W.E.A., the teachers, and Friendly Societies send 60 per cent. of the members; the trade unions and the co-operatives only 40 per cent.<sup>4</sup> On Joint Committees between the W.E.A. and the Universities it was customary until very recently to have two honorary secretaries, one to represent the University, and one, Labour. The Labour representative as a rule has been the district W.E.A. secretary and not necessarily a trade unionist.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A.E.C., p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> This statement is based on the figures given for societies affiliated to the W.E.A. In 1914, they numbered as follows: Trade unions, etc. 953; Co-operative bodies 388, Adult schools 341; Working Men's clubs 175; Educational Soc. 151; Teachers' Associations 65; University bodies 15; Local Education Authorities 16; Various 451. (*Ibid.*, pp. 214-215.)

<sup>3</sup> Highway, Mar. 1922, p. 90. A.E.C., p. 121.      <sup>4</sup> A.E.C., p. 199

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198. Another authority states that the chairman . . . always represents the University, the vice-chairman, labour. *Adult Education and the Trade Unionist*, p. 55.

In other words, the trade unions neither at Ruskin, prior to 1910, nor in the W.E.A. prior to 1923, were granted representation on governing committees in accordance with any well-defined numerical rule.

The question of workers' control of Workers' Education was not raised clearly nor met squarely until 1909 when a student strike occurred at Ruskin College and the majority of students who were trade unionists seceded to form another educational institution "in which a group of trade unions were the only managers."

To the casual onlooker this uprising turned upon the question of personal loyalty to an instructor. Dennis Hird, Principal, was dismissed by the governing board upon charges of being unable to maintain discipline.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, the causes of the strike lay far back in the history of the college. One was the form of control exercised by members of the Oxford teaching staff, and the other, the social back-ground of the young working men who formed the student body.

While Mr. Vrooman remained in England the college had existed as a private enterprise to which both University and trade unions maintained a certain amount of indifference. After the founder returned to the United States, it fell upon evil days and was forced to apply to charitably inclined individuals for support. As time went on, however, the unions renewed their interest. In 1907 the college proudly boasted that it paid its way and obtained a standing in the labour world. This success caused the University authorities to remember its existence and to make overtures of friendship. Friendship soon assumed a managerial tone, and the content of instruction was bent in a less class-conscious direction.

The students at Ruskin, between 1907 and 1909, however, were among those trade unionists who had been subjected to the influence of the Socialist Labour

<sup>1</sup> Paul, *op. cit.*, pp 31, 53, 54, 109 Mr. W. Nairne is mentioned as having formed classes in Marx on the Clyde in the early nineties.

Party and press. Some of them had been members of Marxist classes on the Clyde.<sup>1</sup> This experience led them to become dissatisfied with their instructors. They objected to alleged unfair marking<sup>2</sup> and the economic doctrines taught. "Those who had been grounded in the labour theory of value naturally grew impatient when they were blandly informed that 'wages are the sacrifice employers have to make in order to get the work done.'"<sup>3</sup> They felt that tutors who had never come in contact with the working-class point of view except through the medium of books<sup>2</sup> were incompetent. They began to form study classes among themselves.<sup>3</sup> Finally in 1908 through the Plebs League,<sup>4</sup> a students' organization, they rejected a proposal of closer affiliation with the University than already existed. For although the Charter of Incorporation prevented Ruskin College from being absorbed by Oxford, they felt that the College could easily be dominated by University representatives.<sup>5</sup> Dennis Hird was in sympathy with their conviction. His dismissal followed, and the strike was the result.

When the strike occurred, the students resolved by a vote of 46 to 7 to appeal to trade union, labour, and socialist bodies for a 100,000 shilling fund with which to open a college for working men entirely controlled by the labour movement. Of the five men opposed to the idea, two were neutral and two later joined the majority. None of the dissenters were members of trade unions.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paul, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> *The Burning Question*, 1909, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6. *London Times*, Mar 30.

<sup>4</sup> The name was suggested by a S.L.P. reprint of Daniel De Leon's *Two Pages from Roman History*, Paul, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>5</sup> *The Burning Question*, pp. 2-6. Ruskin College authorities had already initiated a policy of impartiality in teaching controversial questions and thereby won the financial support of such men as the Dukes of Fife and Norfolk, Lords Avebury, Crewe, Monkswell, Ripon, Rothschild, Tweedmouth, Northcliffe, Rosebery, Wolverhampton, A. J. Balfour, Prof. Marshall, and Prof. Smart.

<sup>6</sup> *London Times*, Apr. 5, 1909, p. 8.

The secessionists were supported by 90 per cent. of the 450 alumni of Ruskin College and by such other representative trade unionists as Mr. Robert Smillie, and Mr. Macpherson, M.P.<sup>1</sup>

The educational enterprise known as the Labour College began with a propagandist wing, the Plebs League; and a teaching wing, the College itself. The League is made up of ex-students and supporters of the College. Its object is "to further the interests of independent working-class education as a partisan effort to improve the position of labour in the present and to assist ultimately in the abolition of wage-slavery." It forms classes, publishes text-books and study courses, and issues the monthly "Plebs."

The Labour College now in London was located first at Oxford. Like Ruskin it is a residential college. In 1913-1914 there were 14 students enrolled.<sup>2</sup> In 1921 this number had increased to 32.<sup>3</sup> In 1920, housing was provided for 70<sup>4</sup> and 200 applications were sent in for 8 scholarships.<sup>5</sup> Thirteen years after the strike at Ruskin the new college was estimated to reach 15,000 working-class students.<sup>6</sup>

Of course, this number was not taught in one centre. The residential idea was adhered to for a time. But as soon as the work expanded, students were met in evening and Sunday classes in the provinces as well as in London, and correspondence courses were inaugurated. The gospel preached by the Plebs League made a particularly deep impression upon the miners and working men of South Wales and Scotland, where the creed of Marx proved attractive to a temperamentally religious people.<sup>7</sup> Classes increased in many districts.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, Sept. 10, 1909, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> A.E.C., p. 75

<sup>3</sup> *The Plebs*, July 1923, p. 301.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, Sept 1920, p. 148.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, Mar. 1919, p. 73.

<sup>6</sup> Starr, Mark, *Working Class Education*, The Labour Monthly, Jan. 1922, p. 53.

<sup>7</sup> Shadwell, Arthur, "The Labour Situation in Great Britain," *Atlantic Monthly*, Sept. 1921, pp. 406-416

Accordingly in 1921 the Labour College and Plebs League underwent a reorganization<sup>1</sup> for the purpose of co-ordinating widely scattered activities. The new organization known as the National Council of Labour Colleges is composed of the Labour College, London, the Scottish Labour College, the Plebs League, the A.U. of Building Trade Workers, and the various London and Provincial Labour Colleges. In the English section of the work 8,993 students are enrolled in evening classes; in the Scottish, 3,005.<sup>2</sup> The two most important centres are the London Labour College and the Scottish Labour College in Glasgow. The former still remains the only residential institution.

The London Labour College has been supported by the South Wales Miners' Federation, the National Union of Railwaymen, and more recently by the Union of Post Office Workers.<sup>3</sup> Students are sent from these organizations, from the Northumberland and Forest of Dean Miners, and from the Dryers' and Bleachers' Federation.<sup>4</sup> In 1921 there were 32 resident students in the Labour College, and 7,000-8,000 in attendance at 37 metropolitan branches. In 1922-1923, the Scottish College ran 30 classes in Glasgow with 824 students and 51 classes in the provinces with 2,000 students.

The head of the London School is W. W. Craik, a railroad man; the principal of the Scottish College, John Maclean, a former school teacher. Two whole-time teachers are maintained in Glasgow, five in the Scottish provinces, and two in the Rhondda Valley.<sup>5</sup> The London College has on its staff two University graduates. The remainder of its lecturers have an intimate knowledge and experience of the labour move-

<sup>1</sup> *The Plebs*, Dec. 1921, p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, July 1923, pp. 299-303.

<sup>3</sup> *New Statesman*, July 24, 1920, p. 439.

<sup>4</sup> *The Plebs*, Oct. 1919.

<sup>5</sup> Shadwell, A., "The Revolutionary Movement in Great Britain," *London Times*, Jan. 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 18, 1921.

ment.<sup>1</sup> The day classes in Glasgow are conducted by trained teachers who are graduates of Glasgow University.<sup>2</sup>

### III

The Plebs strike and the success of the Labour College have forced contemporary trade union England to choose between two opposing conceptions of the purpose of Workers' Education. The first is expressed by the W.E.A. and reiterated by Ruskin College through its affiliation with the former organization.

The social tradition roots of the Workers' Educational Association run far down into the rich soil of philanthropic England. It is possible to detect similarities between its policy and that of William Lovett in his London Working Men's Association. But its inspiration was drawn from humanitarian, religious, and intellectual sources rather than from working-class experience. Its predecessors and nearest kin are the University Extension Movement, the Settlement Movement, Co-operation, and Christian Socialism.

According to a draft of the Constitution as revised in 1922 the Workers' Educational Association announces its object to be the stimulation and satisfaction of working-class demand for knowledge. But behind this formal statement of purpose lies a philosophy of education and society which materially modified the practice of the organization.

In the first place, leaders in the W.E.A. share with the Christian Socialists and their immediate successors the profound conviction that the social problem is spiritual in nature. This conviction colours every act of the organization. It led to the endeavour to bring about co-operation between the church and working men,

<sup>1</sup> Adult Education Committee, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Adult Education and the Trade Unionist*, p. 134. Some 15 whole-time tutors are engaged in the evening class work, besides some 250 voluntary tutors. (*The Plebs*, July 1923, p. 301.)

and doubtless led to the long tenure of office held by President William Temple, a churchman. Members of the Association look upon themselves as "a brotherhood which is fighting the most important fight which has to be waged to-day ; the fight for the spiritual life of the masses."<sup>1</sup> They conceive of themselves as preaching a secular *gospel* of education.<sup>2</sup> The founder and spokesman of the organization, Albert Mansbridge, whose persuasive character and somewhat mystical turn of mind is reminiscent of F. D. Maurice, defines this gospel as one not transcending human limitations, but by its insistence on the development of the legitimate faculties of men, drawing them "to the boundaries of human power, until they face the Unknown." He is convinced that in spite of ignorance, disease, and sin, "all men and women except when under the influence of . . . gambling, drink, and the like are ready and willing to respond to an educational message ; they want to think of, to look at, to experience the things that are worth while." Education leads to the perception of beauty and "humanity is like a great army, its component parts allotted to different tasks, some to learn, some to encourage those who learn, but all to wonder at and enjoy the beauties of the world. . . . The spirit is a continual victor over the flesh, and somehow enforces its will. Even overworked men will turn to close study . . . and find rest and peace in doing so. . . . There is no greater sin than to cause a man to be overstrained so that his mind and spirit hangs limp ; it is better to torture his body, for then, as with the martyr, his mind and spirit might still remain free."<sup>3</sup>

There is something about the Association which observers and students refer to as the W.E.A. spirit. By one of the former it is described as "the concentrated expression of the elite of the English working class after

<sup>1</sup> Picht, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> Mansbridge, *An Adventure*, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xvii.



an intensified spiritual life."<sup>1</sup> This spirit leads the W.E.A. to limit the education offered on the vocational side. Like those who preceded them in the field, Mansbridge and his co-labourers insist that the workers have a right "to something more than a 'bread and butter' education. They should be prepared not only for a trade but for life—life not livelihood."<sup>2</sup> The primary purpose of educational activity is the development of individual capacity, judgment and personality. The main educational needs of working men are facilities of a literary, scientific, and recreative character; facilities for understanding the general character and problems of social life and citizenship; and special faculties for equipping them to share in the most effective way in the activities of the various organizations for which they are members.<sup>3</sup>

The social objective of W.E.A. instruction is similar to that of the co-operators. When pressed to state in more concrete terms the precise purpose of Workers' Education, the Association reiterates Arnold Toynbee's emphasis on the need for making citizens. It looks on education not only as an end in itself, but as a means to the equipment for the rights, duties and responsibilities of citizenship. "Our work is almost a profanity," said the President in 1909, "unless we are aiming consciously and deliberately at creating all through the community a new sense of opportunity and responsibility."<sup>4</sup> "Why should the W.E.A. be supported?" asks one of the oldest and most distinguished members. First, he answers, "because it is trying to educate the Democracy. 'There is no body in the world as capable of stimulating and satisfying the demand for popular education. . . . It can do so

<sup>1</sup> Picht, *op cit.*, p 186

<sup>2</sup> Mansbridge, *An Adventure*, p 58.

<sup>3</sup> Pamphlet, *The Workers' Educational Association*. (Birmingham, Birmingham Printers, Ltd, 1920)

<sup>4</sup> Picht, *op cit.*, p. 115.

because, being a democratic body, it knows what the people want; and because working in co-operation with educational bodies, it knows what they on their side can give.' Second, because it has got hold of the right idea of education, namely that accepted of the ancient Greeks. It prefers whenever it can . . . to supplement the text-book oracle by first hand experience and it replaces . . . competitive methods by examination with 'dialogue' or discussion in which all take part. Third, because it provides a means by which the educated, namely University men, may know people they otherwise could not easily meet. For the teaching staff and student body of the W.E.A. is composed of those who are making the England of the next generation; learners and thinkers, wielding influence; men and women who 'count' in the little world in which they live."<sup>1</sup> In other words, the W.E.A. proposes to create a demand for knowledge as well as to fulfil the existing demand; to bring working men to education and education to working men.<sup>2</sup>

Accompanying the emphasis on the spiritual aspects of life and on the importance of training citizens for community service, comes a distinct affirmation by all W.E.A. officials of complete class neutrality.<sup>3</sup> "One main function of education . . . is to lift people above this 'crowd consciousness' and make each individual . . . independent in mind and spirit. We need an education which carries us outside our own circle and puts us into contact with views which are not current in the circle to which we belong."<sup>4</sup> The Association regards education not as a Ladder let down from above but as a Highway along which teachers and students

<sup>1</sup> Zimmern, A. E., Pamphlet, *Why Should University Students Join the W.E.A.* (London, W.E.A., 1913.)

<sup>2</sup> Picht, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

<sup>3</sup> Mansbridge, *Workers' Education in Great Britain*, p. 339.

<sup>4</sup> Temple, William, Pamphlet, *Presidential Address* p. 5. (London, W.E.A., 1919)

walk together exchanging experiences.<sup>1</sup> Like the Christian Socialists it regards fellowship between labour and learning, the united action of the Universities and workers as its most significant contribution to educational and social history. "Our Association has especially sought to bring together University students, who are rich in the education afforded by books and working men who are rich in the education afforded by life. . . . There is a constant process of mutual enrichment."<sup>2</sup> "In the development of working-class education the scholar and administrator must sit side by side with the adult student, at the same table in perfect freedom. The initiative must be with the students. They must say how, why, what, or when they wish to study. It is the business of their colleagues, the scholars and administrators, to help them obtain the satisfaction of their desires. This means that scholar, administrator, and working man must act together."<sup>3</sup> The W.E.A. regards itself, therefore, as a co-ordinator of educational agencies, not as a selector of facts or a propagandist<sup>4</sup> of any one body of knowledge, theory, or platform. It is non-party and unsectarian.

Accordingly, in order to avoid "the perilous and unhappy seas" of being used for immediate, economic, social, or political purposes, the Association insists upon an *inclusive* gospel of education. The content of class-room work depends upon the wishes of the students. A tutor is permitted to advance any social theory he desires with the one provision that his students care to hear it. But the spirit of the Association is such that "in actual practice there is little clashing in a group of students, for the class is not intended for the passing of resolutions, but is rather a

<sup>1</sup> Mansbridge, *An Adventure*, p. 31

<sup>2</sup> Mansbridge, *An Adventure*, p. xviii

<sup>3</sup> Temple, *op. cit.*, p. 6

<sup>4</sup> Macmillan, Margaret, Pamphlet, *What is Democratic Education?* p. 3. (London, Knightman and Co.)

means whereby all relevant facts . . . may be looked at and turned over. . . . Co-workers in a class may be furious antagonists in a forum, but the association makes possible enduring friendship arising out of mutual respect."<sup>1</sup>

Prior to 1909 the W.E.A. occupied the field alone and practised unmolested a Fabian tactic of winning from the existing educational order all that it could offer.<sup>2</sup> Since that date, it has been reluctantly forced upon the battle-field, to define its purpose, to reiterate its allegiance to working-class principles in stronger and stronger terms and finally, to be placed on the defensive. For the life-lines of the Labour College have fallen along stormy ways. It was born out of dissension. It has thrived on opposition. Undoubtedly, part of its intellectual stock-in-trade consists in keeping the subject of Workers' Education alive by systematic and uncompromising irritation of other agencies. The force of its logic is enhanced by the fact that it takes the offensive and by the activity of spokesmen who are witty, unhampered by a desire to promote harmony, and sincere.

The conception of the purpose of Workers' Education entertained by the Plebs League and Labour College is diametrically opposed to that developed by the W.E.A. Against the contention of the latter that the social movement is spiritual in nature they set up the materialistic conception of history. Plebeians believe in the Marxian analysis and in the class struggle. They believe in organizing the forces of labour and permeating it with working-class culture<sup>3</sup> which, for the time being, is a fighting culture.<sup>4</sup> They regard the Labour College as a vocational school where technique of leadership in the class conflict is taught

<sup>1</sup> Mansbridge, *An Adventure*, pp 54-55.

<sup>2</sup> *The Highway*, May 1922, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> *The Highway*, Dec. 1921, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, May 1922, p 120.

much as a theological school teaches the technique of leadership in the church. Plebeians are not neutral. They are "out to make class consciousness and to deepen it."<sup>1</sup>

The social objective of Plebeians is not the making of good citizens. They regard citizenship as mythical<sup>2</sup> in the present order of society split asunder by class antagonisms. According to them, the workers "need educational tools and weapons . . . for their work as sappers and miners among the foundations of capitalism . . . as builders of the new order."<sup>3</sup> They repudiate education merely for the improvement of the mind. "No education is of any use which does not aim at emancipation."<sup>4</sup> They do not study history for its own sake, any more than they seek education for its own sake. They study it "in order to make it—that is, bring about social change. We have not merely to collect facts, but to find out what connects them."<sup>5</sup> To them there is a working-class point of view in the social sciences, just as there is a working-class point of view in every important social problem to-day.

The Labour College finally is not neutral. The object of the Plebs League briefly stated is "to further the interests of independent working-class education in a partisan effort to improve the conditions of Labour in the present and to aid in the abolition of wage-slavery."<sup>6</sup> It holds that education derived from the University or supported by government grants will not provide the knowledge required by the workers. Independent

<sup>1</sup> *The Plebs*, Oct. 1922, p. 339

<sup>2</sup> Paul, E. and C., "Rival Philosophies of Working Class Education," *The Highway*, May 1922, p. 122

<sup>3</sup> Pamphlet, *What is Independent Working Class Education?* pp. 11-15

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> *The Highway*, 1921, p. 121. The object of the National Council of Labour Colleges is "the education of the workers from the working-class point of view. In other words, the provision of Independent Working Class Education—education not merely controlled by the workers but of a *working-class character*." (*The Plebs*, July 1923, p. 299.)

working-class education is defined accordingly, as "that which is unaffiliated with conventional institutions of learning."<sup>1</sup> "Ruskin College, the W.E.A. and the W.E.T.U.C. through their teaching endorse the view that those institutions which train men to govern Labour will also train Labour to overthrow the government. They all deny and ignore the social division in society. . . . They profess 'impartiality' and stand above the struggle. . . . Not recognizing Labour's fundamental problem, namely, economic subjection, they throw no light on it. They advocate theories in the educational sphere similar to Whitleyism, and Co-partnership in the industrial arena, or the coalition in the political sphere. . . . The industrial and political enemies of Labour cannot be its educational friends. . . . The education of the Labour Colleges is condemned by the industrial and political enemies of the workers. The education of Ruskin College and the W.E.A. receive their blessing and support. . . . Labour requires a kind of education which will provide the necessary knowledge to solve its problem of economic subjection. Economic subjection has modified mental subjection. The workers have gone to their capitalist masters for knowledge. . . . They view their problems through their masters' eyes. This fact is responsible for the chaos and confusion in the Labour Movement at the present time."<sup>2</sup>

Plebeians show their real talent for keeping the subject of Workers' Education alive, however, in the pages of their magazine "The Plebs," which carries each month a flood of biting, aphoristic wisdom sometimes original, sometimes culled from literature, always to the point.<sup>3</sup> The Plebs League wears the Twentieth

<sup>1</sup> *The Highway*, May 1922, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> Holder, R., "Seditious Propaganda," *The Plebs*, August 1922.

<sup>3</sup> "What peace is there between the hyena and the dog; and what peace between the rich man and the poor?" *Ecclesiastics*, xiii, 8. (*The Plebs*, Oct. 1921.)

"Anyone who pretends to be neutral writes himself down as a fool and a sham" *William James*. (*Ibid*, Dec. 1921.)

"The proletariat is not oppressed because its oppressors despise and

Century mantle of Chartism. It pleads with its members to *Agitate, Educate, Organise*. To this exhortation it adds the characteristic statement. "I can promise to be candid but not impartial."<sup>1</sup>

## IV

Certain spectators of the conflict between the Workers' Educational Association and the Labour College have endeavoured to harmonize the rival philosophies of the two organizations. Indeed, the Workers' Educational Association itself claims to be uncertain as to whether the controversy possesses all the importance ascribed to it by the Plebs League. Its members display considerable patience in meeting Plebeian shafts of satire. They claim to have no objection to "technical" instruction for service to the labour movement and refuse to say that there is no room for the kind of education advocated by their critics.<sup>2</sup> A leading spokesman for the Workers' Educational Association says that "in spite of the divergences in policy and method between these different agencies, they possess a fundamental unity of aim and purpose. This purpose is to satisfy the dual educational demand of the workers, first for training specifically

mistrust it, but because it despises and mistrusts itself" *Bernard Shaw*. (*Ibid.*, Nov 1921.)

"Woe to him who seeks to pour oil upon the waters when God has brewed them into a gale" *Moby Dick* (*Ibid.*, Sept 1921.)

"He will be a smart policeman who can arrest the spread of ideas." (*Ibid.*, June 1921)

"Don't be a bone head. A bone in the back's worth two in the head." (*Ibid.*, Mar. 1922.)

"The working class has been in the habit of sending out its Thinking. It's a bad habit. It has to learn to do its own" (*Ibid.*, Nov. 1920.)

"Why may the W.E.A. be said to teach filleted economics? Because the bones of contention have been removed"

"What is the use of having a trade union ticket in your pocket if the boss has your head in his?" (*Ibid.*, Apr 1922)

<sup>1</sup> *The Plebs*, Aug 1922, p 241.

<sup>2</sup> "Education versus 'Proletcult'," Editorial. *The Highway*, May 1922, p. 120.

directed toward rendering themselves better fitted for the responsibilities of membership in political, industrial and social organizations; second, for education for fuller personal development."<sup>1</sup> Another, G. D. H. Cole, distinguishes between propaganda, the activity of the Labour College, and education, the service of the W.E.A. He assigns to each of them an important and legitimate function in the labour movement.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the respective merits of the two organizations, one thing is plain. The insistence of the Labour College upon independent working-class education, or education for workers controlled by workers, has forced other enterprises claiming working-class support into salutary seasons of self-examination.<sup>3</sup> The effect of the student strike upon Ruskin College was prompt and obvious. In 1910 the institution was placed once and for all in the hands of the working-class organizations financing it. Any trade union and labour council, or co-operative society, maintaining<sup>4</sup> a student or students at the College has since been entitled to have one representative on the governing board. The Council contains, in addition, two representatives from national labour bodies, and three members of academic standing. The latter have consultative powers but no vote.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Greenwood, Arthur, "Labour and Education," in *Cambridge Essays on Adult Education*, ed by R. St. J. Parry, pp. 123-124. (Cambridge, University Press, 1920)

<sup>2</sup> Cole, G. D. H., *Trade Unionism and Education*, pp. 370-373. W.E.A. Year Book, 1918.

<sup>3</sup> G. D. H. Cole asserts that the credit for the new interest of trade unions in education must also be given to the Labour College. (*New Statesman*)

<sup>4</sup> Fees were £100 per year. They covered board, lodging, and educational facilities. Extra allowance for books, travelling, and personal expenses were made. (*Adult Education and Trade Unionism*, pp. 32-33.)

<sup>5</sup> The national bodies represented in the Ruskin College Council in 1919 were the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, the General Federation of Trade Unions, the Co-operative Union, the Working Men's Club, and Institute Union, the Weavers' Amalgamated, the North Cumberland Miners' Association, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, and the Workers' Union. (A.E.C., p. 221)



Within the last three or four years, the W.E.A. has also had to revise its administrative scheme. In October 1919, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation attracted by the Labour College plan of "independent working-class education" but compelled by considerations of economy to apply to the Workers' Educational Association for some form of joint activity, developed a new type of educational control known as the Workers' Education Trade Union Committee, or the W.E.T.U.C.<sup>1</sup>

This committee operates through seven divisional committees over all parts of England, Scotland, and Wales in which there are branches of the National Steel Trades Confederation. It provides for classes and other educational facilities for members of constituent unions. Its constitution is broad. Trade union grants of funds may be made for any form of Workers' Education, including that offered by the Labour College, provided only that it be under trade-union control. The most important contribution of the W.E.T.U.C. to Workers' Education has been its insistence upon the presence of a trade union majority on all committees and its effort to interest the Trade Union Congress in officially supporting adult education.

As a result of the organization of the W.E.T.U.C., the policy of the W.E.A. with respect to the appointment of governing committees has been greatly modified. According to the new practice a member of the Confederation is now chairman of committee, the W.E.A. district secretary is organizing secretary and the Confederation, in every case, has a majority of committee-men.<sup>2</sup>

The example of the Confederation has also been infectious in the Trade Union World. A year after the

<sup>1</sup> Other unions such as the Union of Post Office Workers, the Railway Club Association, and the Association of Engineering and Ship Building Draftsmen, have since drafted similar schemes. (*The Highway*, Dec. 1922, p. 33)

<sup>2</sup> *Adult Education and the Trade Unionist*, p. 2.

formation of the W.E.T.U.C., in October 1919, sixteen National Trade Unions met in conference on the subject of Workers' Education and decided to appoint a committee to present the question to the Trade Union Congress.<sup>1</sup> This Committee is known as the Trade Union Education Enquiry Committee or the T.U.E.E.C., and consists entirely of trade union members.<sup>2</sup> Its object is to induce the whole trade union movement to consider officially the scheme already tried out by the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation. This objective has been endorsed by the Trade Union Congress, and the Committee is now working on a plan for integrating Workers' Education under trade union control.<sup>3</sup> The plan proposes that a central education body for the whole movement be set up; every union allocating a certain regular sum for educational work; each union to be free to designate the money for special forms of educational endeavour,<sup>4</sup> under any existing educational agency.

The establishment of the new Workers' Education Trade Union Committee was the signal for a renewal of the controversy between proponents of the W.E.A. and the Labour College. Officially, committee-men stated that they regarded it as no part of their duty "to adjudicate between different schools of thought" in Workers' Education. They desired to utilize the services of all working-class colleges and educational organizations.<sup>5</sup> The chairman of the W.E.T.U.C., however, realized quite fully the hold the Labour College principle of independent education had upon a large number of the rank and file. "There unquestionably exists in the minds of working men and women,"

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *The Highway*, Dec. 1922, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Cole, G. D. H., "Labour and Education," *New Statesman*, March 11, 1922, p. 642.

<sup>4</sup> Cole, G. D. H., "The Problem of Labour Unity," *New Statesman*, Sept. 3, 1921, p. 586.

<sup>5</sup> *Adult Education and the Trade Unionist*, pp. 10-11.

he stated, "a strong suspicion of the bias of . . . . University . . . . teaching in social and industrial subjects This suspicion is undoubtedly well founded. . . . To ask trade unions to avail themselves of the ordinary educational facilities provided by universities . . . . is . . . . impracticable. . . . They desire to build up their own educational movement, to work out their own salvation in the field of thought, as they are endeavouring to do in the world of action."<sup>1</sup>

In response to this state of mind among the organized workers, the Workers' Educational Association was forced not only to surrender the chairmanship and virtual domination of educational committees; to alter its constitution in order to grant more complete representation of trade unions on the central executives; but also to draft a clearer statement of its attitude toward working-class control.<sup>2</sup>

The Secretary of the W.E.A. in 1921 noted that the purpose of Workers' Education should be the attainment of working men "of the mental equipment that

<sup>1</sup> Paul, *op cit*, pp 118, 120.

<sup>2</sup> "Statement of Policy" Working-class control does not imply the impressing of any particular doctrine on the students, but only the provision of the education which the students themselves desire. Nor does it involve dissociation from Universities and Education Authorities, for, while working-class control is a necessary condition of success, the co-operation of these bodies is also required. . . The classes themselves should choose their subjects of study, and the appointment of the tutor and the framing of the syllabus should be made with their co-operation and approval. The aim of the classes should be to study the subject of their choice in all its aspects. The classes are essentially a co-operative adventure, and depend for their success on full freedom of discussion and the mutual initiative of tutor and students.

The principal function of any public educational authority assisting in the provision of classes should be to assure itself, in association with the voluntary body concerned, of the *standard* of work done, and this without restrictions upon expression of opinion by tutor or students.

Success depends on getting the working-class movement, through trade unions, co-operative societies, clubs, and similar bodies, to feel that it is free to build up and control its own educational movement while working in co-operation with the educational bodies already referred to. (*The Highway*, May 1923.)

will enable them to serve their class."<sup>1</sup> The President, two years later, admitted that the Universities have "become, at any rate in England, almost entirely the property of the share-holding class."<sup>2</sup> The Labour College is recognizing the effect of its propaganda upon trade union educational opinion. It firmly refuses to co-operate with the W.E.T.U.C. because while that committee includes representatives of employers' organizations<sup>3</sup> for educating workers, it contains no Plebeian representation. The National Council of Labour Colleges has effected a separate agreement with the Trade Union Congress, whereby the general council of that body recognizing "the different theoretic views in regard to working-class education" and believing it to be in the best interests of the movement "that these differences should exist and be discussed,"<sup>4</sup> gives the Labour College a definite and independent status in the trade union world.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever may be said, therefore, in favour of one side of the controversy or the other is not of great importance. The future of Workers' Education belongs to the unions and the unions are beginning to realize it. Workers' Education in England to-day includes all the efforts made by Church and University groups since 1854. It includes also the Adult School, the Mechanics' Institute, a Co-operative College, and many others. What they are and what they will be is

<sup>1</sup> Mactavish, J. M., "The Education of Class Conscious Workers," *Justice*, Oct 7, 1921.

<sup>2</sup> *The Highway*, Jan 1923, p 49. Address by the Rev William Temple.

<sup>3</sup> Millar, J. P. M., "The W.E.A. Spider, and the T.U.C. Fly," *The Plebs*, Aug 1922, pp. 246, 255, Nov 1922, p. 429.

<sup>4</sup> *The Plebs*, Nov 1922, p 429 and foot-note.

<sup>5</sup> The N.C.L.C. expressed its willingness to become party to the centralized movement under the Trade Union College, "On the condition that our present policy and standpoint in education remains unchanged." (*The Plebs*, May 1923, p 194) There is evidence too that the Plebs League has had to yield its position on the extreme left to yet another group. (*The Plebs*, Mar. 1923)

governed no longer by purposes of founders and cherished tradition. The working class through its own organizations has assumed leadership. Old ideals have been scrapped, and the education of workers will proceed in conformity with the ambitions of their class.

The latest argument among trade unionists for Workers' Education, and the one finding most emphatic expression in the W.E.T.U.C. and T.U.E.C. is not concerned primarily with the training of administrators for trade unions alone. Under the spell of political success, younger men in the labour movement are pleading with their fellows to equip themselves "for that larger share in the machinery of government which all of us recognize is coming very rapidly to the workers."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Frank Hodges, a coal-miner, a leader of the strike at Ruskin College, and one of the founders of the Labour College, recommended the education of trade unionists not merely as missionaries and propagandists for the labour movement. "I am thinking," he said, "more particularly of the education of the young men who perhaps in ten years will be called upon to exercise administrative ability in the function of the government. The great social wave—may land the movement into a position of power . . . but when it comes to power if it cannot live upon its capacity for co-ordination, for administration, if it cannot show that it can administer as effectively and as permanently as the institution which it has substituted, then it must expect that the law of evolution will take it back to the position that we now occupy. There is no permanency based not upon knowledge and understanding."<sup>2</sup> In official educational literature the unions even go so far as to claim the support of public funds in order to educate

<sup>1</sup> Trades Union Congress, 53rd *Annual Report*. (London, Co-operative Printing Society, Ltd, 1921), p. 362.

<sup>2</sup> Trades Union Congress, *op cit*, p. 363. See also Report of Hodges' Speech, Dunn, Robert W. "Impressions of the British Trades Union Congress," N.Y., *Call Magazine*, p. 3.

labour to effect a peaceful revolution. "The right of Trade Unions as a recognized part of the social and industrial system to use their power and influence and prestige to effect a revolution in a constitutional way, *i.e.*, by consent—is not challenged. If the right of trade unions to effect vast changes in a constitutional way is conceded, then we submit that public funds should be available to equip Trade Unions for the task as only by such means can social and industrial changes that are now inevitable be effected in a peaceable constitutional way."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Adult Education and the Trade Unionist*, p 11.



UNITED STATES





## CHAPTER VIII

### THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL TRADITION

"However successful organized labour has been in many ways, it has never been successful in the direction of the education of its children. Capital still prepares the school books and practically controls all the school systems of the world "

ROGER BABSON.

#### I

ENGLAND and the United States resemble one another in many ways. Their languages are practically identical. The kinship of their more important institutions is obvious. In both countries economic development has seemed to follow a similar pattern, and the industrial revolution, occurring at approximately the same time, has produced similar problems. What could be more reasonable than to assume that political and economic forces have operated in the same way in both countries to exclude the poor from knowledge ; that the working-class movement in both has been composed of the same economic groups and has taken the same steps to secure education ?

Argument based on similarities, however, will not in this case prove as fruitful as one based on differences. For, although education in the United States, like education elsewhere, owes its existence to the demand of a subject political and economic group, the attainment of the public school system, the development of an educational tradition, and the final assumption by trade unionists of the function of teaching has followed a different course. Neither frightened gentry nor greedy manufacturers have in America been moved to found

Adult Schools or a network of Mechanics' Institutes. There has been no Chartist uprising. Neither the Church nor University, as such, has undertaken the education of the working class, as such. The social settlement has devoted itself almost exclusively to neighbourhood welfare and recreation. The adult American working man furthermore has for several generations been less interested in self-education than the British, and the appearance of Workers' Education has been correspondingly retarded.

Nevertheless, Trade Union Colleges, Workers' Universities, and similar agencies have finally appeared. By whom were they founded? By whom were preceding educational agencies, such as the public school, founded? What has been the American educational tradition? What part has the working class taken in framing it?

An attempt to answer these questions leads inevitably to an inquiry into the genealogy of the American working class, and a discussion of the genealogy of the American working class demands consideration of the subject of immigration and its influence on American educational institutions.

During periods of industrial expansion when the supply of labour in the United States tends to fall short of demand, manufacturers habitually apply to European reservoirs of poverty and distress for additional workers. This was true in the 17th century no less than in the 20th, for the American colonies in their inception were largely business ventures undertaken by ordinary business men for purposes of gain. The plantations were managed and the colonies governed by representatives of joint stock companies or appointees of the Crown. The work of these officials was that of superintendence and management. They were doubtless drawn from the upper levels of contemporary European society. The people who performed the unskilled labour on plantations, however, were folk of humbler

antecedents. Trees were felled, cabins built, ground broken and seed planted by those who, in the older countries, had been farmers, artisans and labourers.

The colonial labour supply was recruited from an old world profoundly shaken by economic, political and religious changes. Fields formerly cultivated by an ancient and conservative peasantry had been enclosed and were used for grazing purposes. Tenants were evicted to make pasturage for sheep. And country folk who had formerly led industrious and virtuous lives were set to roam "out of their known and accustomed houses, fyndyne no place to rest in." Rising prices pushed them over the poverty line. The destruction of monasteries removed customary sources of relief for which the Elizabethan Poor Law substituted harsh and ineffective measures. For those thus thrown out of old habits of work, the choice of new vocations was narrow. Did they join the ranks of begging wanderers, they were thrown into prison or work-house. Did they become thieving vagabonds, they were hung. Did they hear rumours of wealth to be gathered across the Atlantic, they had no funds with which to pay their passage. As early as 1576, observers of conditions advocated colonization for the "meaner soart of people" who through want were "inforced to commit outragious offences", whereby they were "dayly consumed by the gallows."<sup>1</sup> But the "meaner soart" were backward in emigrating and the better sort were encouraged to "helpe ye poorer with means to transport them." In 1661 a government council met to consider the best way of furnishing people for the plantations. Accordingly, vagrant and sturdy yeomen, skilled and unskilled, began to sell themselves as indentured servants to colonial planters. Hardly a ship made port in the New World without a cargo of British or European poor to be sold at the docks for periods of from three to seven years.

<sup>1</sup> Hakluyt, VII, p. 286, quoted by Beer, G. L., *The Origins of the Colonial System, 1578-1660*, p. 37. (N.Y., Macmillan, 1908)

Immigrant agents were employed on commission by shipping companies in Holland and Germany. Quantities of descriptive pamphlets and advertisements were circulated purporting to reveal brilliant prospects for settlers. In fact, the colonies became the refuge of those who could not support themselves under European conditions and colonization was approved by European statesmen not only as a form of poor relief but also as a means of reducing the dangers of sedition and rebellion.<sup>1</sup>

The poor also came to America as convicts and political prisoners. The political scene in the old countries was even less calm than the economic. It was during the 17th Century in England that Cavalier and Roundhead, Anglican, Catholic, Puritan and Separatist struggled for supremacy. As each contending party fought its way to temporary or permanent control, adherents of the lost cause were apprehended and sentenced with prisoners convicted of other crimes, to penal servitude in the colonies. These groups inevitably included men guilty of serious felonies, as well as those whose only offence was poverty, debt or the theft of a loaf of bread on which to sustain life. They also included men convicted or suspected of radical political opinions or activities. Cromwell deported Levellers, while Fifth Monarchy men and Monmouth Rebels were sentenced to the Colonies after the Restoration. The Roundhead Army was raised by men of the merchant class but the personnel of all of the more republican groups during the period was composed of town artisans, yeomen and farm labourers. When English ploughmen could no longer safely see visions in English fields, and London tinkers

<sup>1</sup> McCormac, E. I., *White Servitude in Maryland, 1634-1820, passim*. (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Studies in History and Political Science, 1904, series XXII, No. 3-4) Faust, A. B., *The German Element in the United States, passim*. (N.Y., Houghton, Mifflin, 1909) Becker, C. L., *Beginnings of the American People, passim* (N.Y., Houghton, Mifflin, 1915)

no longer dream dreams, they emigrated or were exiled to America.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, by far the largest part of the voluntary emigration to the New World came as the result of a desire to secure religious freedom. The Brownists, the Mennonites, the Independents, the Baptists, the Puritans and the Quakers declared against the existence of a state church and in favour of congregational autonomy. But who were the people who followed the doctrines of these sects, if not men and women from the humbler walks of life? The class character of many reformation movements is concealed by the veil of religion. Where membership in separatist congregations did not mean also affiliation with Levellers, Fifth Monarchy Men, or other political groups, strength was drawn from the same social soil. For the books which Bunyan wrote in Bedford Jail represented religion to thousands of the poor. The rise of Quakerism was rendered possible by the intellectual stirring among English common people and the personal labour of George Fox, a weaver. And the passenger list of the *Mayflower* was made up of untutored farm hands from a remote rural district and artisans picked up at the last moment on the London streets.<sup>2</sup> Indeed a cross section of the population of the New World at any time during the pre-Revolutionary period would have revealed the fact that the fathers of the country were in economic and political origin the forefathers of the American working class.

## II

With such a background of economic, political and religious disability the emigrants to the New World, like the disinherited factory population of later England,

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan, G M, *England under the Stuarts*, *passim*. (N.Y., Putnam, 1922)

<sup>2</sup> Adams, J T, *The Founding of New England*, pp. 86, 97. (Boston, Atlantic Monthly Press, 1921.)

naturally manifested an interest in knowledge. Popular education, in fact, was seriously proposed in the colonies long before it was considered in England. Twenty-two years after the landing of the *Mayflower*, the Puritan founders of Massachusetts enacted the first school law. A second law of 1647 drew the outlines of a complete educational system, "supported by the contributions of the people, private beneficence, public taxation, and legislative grants."<sup>1</sup> Other colonies followed the same plan, and two years later some degree of education was compulsory in every New England colony except Rhode Island. "The charter of the New Netherlands patroons of 1630-1635 provided for education, and in 1642 persons contracting marriage in New York promised to bring up their children decently, according to their ability to keep them at school, and to let them learn reading, and writing and a good trade." William Penn's frame of government, accepted by the General Assembly in 1682, contained a similar provision for education, "in order that youth may be successively trained up in virtue and useful knowledge." The first free school in Maryland procured a teacher in 1724. The early German settlers in North Carolina brought their religious books with them.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the development of a scheme of popular compulsory education was more acceptable on paper in the colonies than in practice. Teachers, in the first place, were hard to find. The first Massachusetts' law overcame that difficulty by requiring the head of every household to educate his own children. Then "traveling schools" were organized which met first in one corner of a town, and then in another. Final recourse was had to the employment as teachers

<sup>1</sup> Carlton, F. T., *Economic Influences on Educational Progress in the United States, 1820-1850*. (Madison, Wisconsin Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin, 1908, No. 221, Economics and Political Science Series, Vol. IV, No. 1, pp. 12, 13.)

<sup>2</sup> Calhoun, A. W., *A Social History of the American Family*, Vol. I, pp. 116, 174, 201, 293 (Cleveland, Clarke, 1917.)

of well educated convicts and indentured servants. The practice in England, under the Five Mile Act of 1665, of apprehending teachers and clergymen who advocated any alteration of government either in Church or State, was a probable source of educated political prisoners in the Colonies.<sup>1</sup> Not a ship arrived in which schoolmasters and ministers were not as regularly advertised for sale as weavers, tailors or any other trade.<sup>2</sup>

A German colonist cited by Faust proposed, if ever he became the owner of twenty pounds, to buy "the first German student who came to Philadelphia" for the purpose of putting him into a garret and establishing a Latin school.<sup>3</sup>

Excluding the difficulty of securing teachers, however, the chief obstacle to the actual establishment of a system of popular education was the same in the New World as in England, namely, the presence of a ruling group which doubted the wisdom of educating the poor. For the transplanting of the Puritan to New England, the Cavalier to Maryland, and members of the English middle and upper classes to other colonies as owners and managers of large estates, did not automatically instil in them a love of religious toleration or a belief in individual right. While members of the governing groups in the colonies were extremely sensitive to any effort on the part of the residents in the homeland to exert control over colonial affairs, they were equally opposed to the extension of political privilege to the mass of colonists. The political franchise in Massachusetts and Connecticut was granted to but one person in fifty. In Rhode Island freemen formed about one per cent. of the population. In New York over one-half the males over twenty-one years of age were denied participation in elections.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan, *op. cit.*, pp 341-342.

<sup>2</sup> McCormac, *op cit*, pp 41, 76.

<sup>3</sup> Faust, *op. cit*, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> Adams, J. T., *Revolutionary New England*, pp 316, 317 (Boston, Atlantic Monthly Press, 1923.)



In fact, each wave of newer immigration to the colonies was regarded by earlier arrivals, particularly the first, as an inferior and dangerous addition to the population. The colonial population was definitely stratified and the inner history of many colonial communities is checkered with conflicts between the newer, poorer, more discontented folk, and the older, wealthier and longer established residents. The British revolution of 1688 was re-echoed in the colonies by insurrections among settlers holding ideas of "free government" or "free parliament." Demands were constantly made for representative assemblies, and references were heard concerning the indignities suffered by the poor. The American Revolution was, in fact, presaged by a clearly defined and strongly felt divergence of interest between men of wealth, social standing and education and those working in shops, on farms or in frontier settlements.<sup>1</sup>

Although Puritan New England took the lead in educational matters, there was no room in the Puritan temperament for the toleration of individual differences or social equality. The New England father was instructed by law to educate his children in order to promote the religious and moral welfare of the community. But in enacting such legislation the community was held to include church members only, and the system of education thus foreshadowed was intended to meet the intellectual need of only a small percentage of the population. The private academy with fees for tuition was soon introduced and class differences in education appeared. By the time the Revolution began, the only schools open to the children of the poor were those conducted in the name of charity.

### III

The first successful effort of the less prosperous among early Americans to secure a voice in the manage-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p 137.

ment of their own affairs occurred some forty or more years after the Revolution. The instrument of the effort was the Working Men's Party organized about 1828. The formation of the Party was effected soon after suffrage was freed from religious and property qualifications, but it was composed of men who were sons or grandsons of Americans who had suffered under such restrictions. Undoubtedly memories were present in the background of their minds of disagreeable social frictions. Some, perhaps, could recall the stories of grandfathers who had fled or been exiled from scenes of continental or British intolerance. Others had lived in the late colonial period when seats in chapel, places at table, and precedence at public functions were still regulated by a nice regard for social difference. The distinction then between gentle folk and simple men was maintained everywhere. Consequently, although some of the grievances of the Party were purely economic, the ultimate source of discontent arose from the conviction that the government had been usurped by the aristocracy. The farmer and frontiersman felt that credit facilities were unnecessarily restricted by the influence of large merchants living in Eastern towns. The small merchant had similar grievances, and artisans complained that the government was callous to the sufferings of the poor, imprisoned them for debt, impressed them into the militia and failed to protect them in the wage relation.<sup>1</sup> Sustained by traditions of protest received from politically disaffected forebears, and by long practice of self-government in Separatist congregations, the Working Men's Party asked for equal participation with monied men in the affairs of government.

Like all new voters, however, and like those especially to whom suffrage happens to come easily, the several groups affected by the redistribution of the franchise in

<sup>1</sup> Perlman, Selig, *A History of Trade Unionism in the United States, passim.* (N.Y., Macmillan, 1922 )

the United States believed that inequality would be corrected by their first ballot. After it was cast, and old leaders still remained in power, they realized that the choice of efficient representatives depended upon the judgment of voters; and the judgment of voters, in turn, upon their intellectual preparation. It became apparent that there was a distinction between a right to govern themselves and the ability to take the government out of the hands of better educated aristocrats. It was observed that education like other political privileges had been extended along property lines. The new electorate were compelled therefore to demand a redistribution of knowledge.

The Party approached the task of establishing an educational system with almost fanatical vehemence. The press of the late twenties and the memoirs of public men are full of comments on the educational situation. The Governor of the State of New York declared that "the great bulwark of republican government is the cultivation of education; for the right of suffrage cannot be exercised in a salutary manner without intelligence." The "Manual for Working Men," published in 1831, declared that it was "to education . . . that one must mainly look for redress of that perverted system of society which dooms the producer to ignorance, to toil, and to penury, to moral degradation, physical want, and social barbarism. . . . A state of Society exists in the country which prevents the producing classes from participation in the fountains of knowledge, and the benefits equally designed for all." The Southern Free Press of Charleston, South Carolina, said "our great object will be to urge you to break down the barrier which separates your children from those of lordly aristocrats."<sup>1</sup>

The demand for education by the Working Men's Party raised up the familiar hue and cry of an apprehensive ruling class. Opposition to educational reform

<sup>1</sup> Carlton, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

was fully as bitter in the United States at that time as it ever had been in England. And the arguments offered against free public education were drawn from familiar old country habits of thought. John Randolph, for example, said to the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829, "Look at that ragged fellow staggering from the whiskey shop, and see the slattern who has gone to reclaim him; where are their children? Running about ragged, idle, ignorant, fit candidates for the penitentiary. Why is all this so? Ask the man and he will tell you. 'Oh! the Government has undertaken to educate our children for us. It has given us a premium for idleness, and I spend on liquor that which I should otherwise be obliged to save to pay for their schooling.'" A New Yorker declared that "so long as taxpayers pay for expensive playgrounds, etc. the children of the poor will increase like rabbits in a burrow." A senator of the United States, while discussing the same subject, declared "that the government would never be properly administered until the labouring classes were reduced to a livelihood of herrings and potatoes." One believer in free education said "when public instruction was bestowed as a boon of charity, it found numerous advocates . . . but not when we justly demand it as a right . . . Its consequences are *then* painted as baneful to the people. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

But the Working Men's Party never wavered until its point was won. The inexperience of leaders led to ultimate defeat on other issues. The only demand which secured effective action was that for free, tax-supported schools. And in Pennsylvania, as a result, public education, free from the taint of charity, dates from 1836; in New York, from 1832.

<sup>1</sup> Carlton, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

## IV

A political organization bearing the name of the Working Men's Party thus became the chief instrument of the founding of the American public school system. Was it also the founder of Worker's Education? Did it formulate for succeeding generations of working men a working-class educational tradition?

In its political and educational aspects, the Working Men's Party appears to have been to labour in the United States, what Chartism was to working men in England. Members of Chartist organizations and of the Working Men's Party professed the same purpose. They demanded equal participation man with man in the direction of political affairs. They regarded education as a political necessity.

The difference between the two movements lay in the distance each had gone in the attainment of that purpose, and the use accordingly, to which education was to be put. American working men could vote. The Working Men's Party demanded public school education, therefore, in order that they might learn to vote intelligently. British working men could not vote. Chartists, therefore, wanted education of a kind which would assist them in their fight for the franchise. The Working Men's Party looked to tax-supported education of children, whether rich or poor, as a guarantee of equality in representation for the coming generation. Chartists experimented in the education of adults in order to produce effective agitators in the immediate conflict. Education to them was desirable, only when it made the consciousness of class differences a political and social force. The purpose of education, according to the Working Men's Party was to erase all political and social barriers.

The Working Men's Party did not found a system of education for the working class as such. Neither did

it formulate a working-class educational tradition. For in spite of its name and in spite of efforts to improve wage and hour conditions, the Working Men's Party was primarily a middle-class movement, and its educational objective was primarily of middle-class origin. Circumstances peculiar to a new country rich in natural resources with a vast acreage of unbroken land, tended to absorb industrial unrest and dull the edge of class dissension.

There was relatively no congestion in industrial centres. The poor were not forced to congregate in slums. Although the industrial revolution occurred in England and in the United States at approximately the same time, the American frontier competed with the American factory town for population. Trade union activity was not the only means of improving working conditions. Collective action was neutralized by constant emigration from urban communities. Any poor man of average intelligence could mend his fortune by taking up free land. Instead of fighting out industrial disputes on the ground, it was a common thing for dissatisfied workmen to hitch up their oxen and move West.

Furthermore, membership in the Working Men's Party was not restricted to working men, but to representatives of what were known as the producing classes. It included, therefore, not only mechanics, and labourers, but also small employers, small merchants, farmers and members of the debtor classes. An attempt was made in Massachusetts to restrict membership to factory operatives, but it proved impossible, because most of the latter were women and children.<sup>1</sup>

Employers exerted a powerful influence over the formation of educational opinion in the Party. This was shown, for example, in 1829, when Robert Dale Owen, son of the English philanthropist, manufacturer,

<sup>1</sup> Perlman, *op cit*, pp 17, 116, 165

and educator, proposed a system of schooling, whereby children were to be educated, clothed and fed at public expense. It was the kind of suggestion to which the British working class of the period was somewhat hospitable. Indeed, a minority of workers in the United States endorsed the plan. But the majority of the Working Men's Party regarded it as an attempt to perpetuate a conflict between classes which electoral and educational reform had been designed to legislate out of existence. They repudiated it in language which bears a striking resemblance to that used by the English gentry with reference to the elder Owen's communistic experiments. With two other Britishers, George Evans and Fanny Wright, the younger Owen was accused of religious infidelity and his educational proposals were construed as an attack on the integrity of the American home. Members of the New York Typographical Society, an organization composed of both workers and employers, hoped that though they were working men, they would "always be found labouring in better company than those who would destroy the dearest of all social ties, and the hope of the great reward of the 'good and faithful servant'". They recognized a certain amount of distress among the labouring class, but insisted that "poverty is not unprotected . . . nor deprived of its just reward." They expressed themselves as being "indignant as free men, that the institutions of our land should be falsified." Some working men who were present, stoutly protested against the reply, and many others opposed it, "but refrained from expressing their opinions . . . by fear of being thrown out of employment."<sup>1</sup>

Thanks to New England zeal, the ability to read and write in the United States was more widely distributed than in England. The removal of illiteracy was not the central problem upon which the Working

<sup>1</sup> Commons, J. R., and Associates, *History of Labour in the United States*, pp. 247-250. (N.Y., Macmillan, 1918)

Men's Party focused its attention. Its chief educational concern was to place newly enfranchised groups upon the same educational level as their former aristocratic rulers; to free them of intellectual embarrassments which made them feel degraded in their own eyes.

The Party observed that the few schools scattered throughout the country were supported by charity. Could they be expected to train free men for independent political judgment? Could self-respecting working men, farmers, and small employers subject their children to the whims of benevolence? Could they risk securing only partial or prejudiced knowledge for the next generation?

In order to prevent possessors of property from exerting undue influence upon the content of education, "the means of equal knowledge," said the Workingman's Advocate in 1830, "should be rendered by legal enactment the common property of all classes." This "security for liberty" was to be obtained by applying the doctrine of equality to school management. Upon this important question all candidates for public office were quizzed. "We wish most distinctly to understand whether they do, or do not, consider it essential to the welfare of the rising generation . . . that an open school and competent teachers . . . from the lowest branch of an infant school to the lecture rooms of practical science, should be established, and those to superintend them to be chosen by the people." They insisted furthermore that in "republican schools there must be no temptation to aristocratical prejudices. The pupils must learn to consider themselves as fellow citizens, equals." The schools were to be institutions where the children of the poor and the rich might meet at the period of life when the "pomp and circumstance of wealth" had not "engendered pride."<sup>1</sup>

A wealth of free, raw land and emigration from

<sup>1</sup> Commons, J. R., and Associates, *Documentary History of Industrial Society*, Vol. V, pp. 99, 93, 116, 165 (Cleveland, Clarke, 1911)



industrial centres to the West drained the early American labour movement of that type of intellectual and physical endurance which in England had produced working-class schools of thought and working-class programmes of education. Land movements in the United States took the place of Chartism; agrarian philosophies of the utopianism of Owen; and an optimistic economic analysis, of the stimulating indictment of the early English socialists. Equalitarian notions, and a bent for practical politics moulded the educational tradition of American labour. Members of the Working Men's Party were not working men with a working-class educational objective. They were dedicated to the fulfilment of middle-class intellectual ideals. They were not searching for truth, but correct knowledge, and the criterion of correctness was possession by the rich. That information which the well-to-do found indispensable to the conduct of public office or the attainment of private fortune was the information the Party wished to hand on to posterity. To them, equality implied not only equal intellectual opportunity, the poor with the rich. It also involved the same preparation for the same social functions. Equal intellectual right was confounded with identical educational need. The public school was devised to standardize knowledge and to transmit the tradition that the mental requirements of one occupational group could not differ, as the result of economic and political change, from those of another.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE AMERICAN LABOUR MOVEMENT AND EDUCATIONAL ORTHODOXY

"The intelligence required of a class to render its power effective in action is much greater than that which was needed to assert a right to it"

A. E. DOBBS

#### I

COLONIAL artisans, farmers and labourers fresh from European conflicts with Church, State or King, sought education as a means of maintaining independent religious and political lives. The public school was established some two centuries later by an organization bearing a working-class complexion, and bound by ties of memory to these earlier working men. But the absence in the twenties and thirties of conditions productive of collective action on a large scale and extending over long periods of time delayed the development of a feeling of mutual dependence among workers in the United States. In the early days of the nation, intellectual effort was not stimulated by the necessity to explain contrasts between wealth and poverty or between ignorance and learning. The mental keenness and critical acumen developed among British labour leaders by long and capable opposition, was not evoked. Ballot and book came easily to American working men. Consequently, the Working Men's Party believed that class differences were artificial and easily erased. In founding the public school, they proposed to educate themselves not for working-class activity but for admission to middle-class opportunity. It was left to immigrants of a later day to recognize the ineffectiveness of public school education as a training for trade union

membership and leadership, and to found Workers' Education.

With the decline of the Working Men's Party in the early thirties industrial society in the United States began to undergo certain changes of great importance to the development of education as a working-class problem. The radicalism and dissent of Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary periods had receded. Nuclei of future cities sprang up on new trade-routes or near sources of power. Lowell, Massachusetts, which in 1820 did not exist, in 1840 had a population of 20,000. During the same period, Cincinnati and Detroit were founded and the population of New York City doubled. This re-distribution of old residents was accompanied by a continuous flow of new ones from the eastern shores of the Atlantic. In 1820, the number of foreign born set ashore in the United States was only 8,385. After 1847, they had increased to 100,000. Between 1847 and 1857 no less than 200,000 arrived each year. Those who came prior to 1825 were largely English, Scotch, Protestant Irish and Protestant German. Their cultural level was approximately the same as that of the residents of the country. After 1848, however, owing to the failure of the potato crop in Ireland, Irish immigration reached a very high point. Of these over one-half were unable to read and write.<sup>1</sup>

The effect of this influx of illiteracy taken together with the failure of the public school to keep pace with growing educational need was apparent to many observers. Europeans travelling in the United States in the early days remarked that Americans were satisfied with a small stock of knowledge provided that it was spread among all classes in like quantity and content. "We see a country of which it may be truly said," wrote de Toqueville,<sup>2</sup> after having visited the

<sup>1</sup> Cubberly, *op. cit.*, p. 34 See also Schlesinger, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> De Toqueville, Alexis, *De la Democratie in Amerique* Quoted by Buckle, *op. cit.*, p. 138

States in the thirties, "that in no other are there so few<sup>1</sup> men of great learning, and so few of great ignorance."

About the same time Harriet Martineau compared the intellectual attainments of the American working man with those of the British. "Surely never were such dandy mechanics seen," she said, speaking of those in the United States, "with slick coats, glossy hats, gay watch-guards, and doe-skin gloves. . . . In England, I believe the highest order of mechanics to be, as a class, the wisest and best men of the community, they have the fewest base and narrow interests. . . . The mechanics of America have nearly all the same advantages, and some others . . . the only respect in which their condition falls below that of English artisans of the highest order is that the knowledge which they have commonly the means of obtaining is not of equal value. The facilities are great; schools, lyceums, libraries are open to them; but the instruction imparted there is not so good as they deserve."<sup>1</sup>

Somewhat the same conditions were observed sixty years later by a visiting French economist.<sup>2</sup> He was struck by the failure of American education to prepare working men for grappling with the intellectual problems peculiar to labour. "Americans have a keen appreciation of what they owe to their educational system," he said, ". . . but the school does not regulate the conditions of labour and the production of wealth. Primary education arouses the intelligence, renders the people capable of doing their work more economically and interests them in social questions; but it is too elementary to inculcate in the youthful mind sound ideas upon subjects with which the instructors themselves are often unfamiliar, and it leaves the people open to utopian doctrines which

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, Harriet, *Society in America*, p. 60. (N Y, Saunders and Otley, 1837)

<sup>2</sup> Lavasseur, F., *The American Workman*, p. 503 (Baltimore, John Hopkins, University Press, 1900)

please their sense of distributive justice and seem to them favourable to the interests of their class."

The soundness of Lavasseur's observations was supported by James Bryce who wrote in his "American Commonwealth" "that the education of the masses is . . . a superficial education goes without saying. It is sufficient to enable them to think they know something about the great problems of politics; insufficient to show them how little they know. The public elementary school gives everybody the key to knowledge in making reading and writing familiar, but it has not time to teach them how to use the key. . . So we may say that if the political education of the average American voter be compared with the average voter in Europe, it stands high; but if it be compared with the function which the theory of American government lays on him, which its spirit implies . . . its inadequacy is manifest."<sup>1</sup>

Nor were these more or less casual observations far from the truth. In New Jersey in 1835, 15,000 adults out of a population of 300,000 were unable to read.<sup>2</sup> Between 1850 and 1860, Georgia had a population of 43,684 white illiterates (to say nothing of 500,000 blacks); Massachusetts had 46,262; Indiana, 60,943; Pennsylvania, 72,156; North Carolina, 68,178.<sup>3</sup> At the present time, judging by army examinations, one-fourth of the American people, whatever their attainments in other languages, are still unable to read newspapers or write an intelligent letter.<sup>4</sup>

Here and there, of course, working men themselves were not unmindful of the fact that the adult labourer often found himself in need of more information than had been instilled by a short attendance in a

<sup>1</sup> Bryce, James, *The American Commonwealth*, Vol IX, p 288. (N Y, Macmillan, 1915)

<sup>2</sup> Commons, *History of Labour*, Vol I, p 182

<sup>3</sup> Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

<sup>4</sup> Graves, F. P., *Public Provision for Education of Adults*, Vol. XV, pp 380-391. School and Society

charity or public school. In Boston, in 1833, a committee on education appointed by a working men's convention, recommended the arrangement of lectures for adults in political economy.<sup>1</sup> In 1834, another group called attention to the lack of knowledge among adult workers. One man declared in an oration before some Boston trade unions that "we are yet but a half-educated people, and being half-civilized . . . the many have been obliged to devote their whole time to bodily labour, while the powers of mind have been wholly neglected."<sup>2</sup> In 1837, following a panic and after a stormy period within the ranks of the National Trades' Union, working men announced that their ultimate hope resided in self-education. They proposed to organize trade associations, not only to protect their trades, but first of all to improve their moral and intellectual condition.

"The primary cause of all the evil and difficulties with which the labouring classes are environed," they said, "can be traced to the want of a correct knowledge of their own resources." They maintained that it was necessary "to speedily disseminate such knowledge as may be conducive to their interest in their respective trades, as well as their general interests as productive labourers." The colleges were held to exercise a "professional monopoly of knowledge, thereby drawing a line of demarcation between the producers of all the wealth and the other portions of society."<sup>3</sup>

On February 22, 1839, delegates from various unions in Philadelphia voted that a "literary and scientific institute for the diffusion of useful knowledge be established;" a Mechanics' Library incorporated ten years before endorsed; and a Mechanics' Hall erected with reading, library, debating, and lecture rooms.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Commons, *op. cit.*, Vol I, p 470.

<sup>2</sup> McNeill, A E, *The Labour Movement, The Problem of To-day*, p 542. (N.Y., Hazen, 1887.)

<sup>3</sup> Commons, *op. cit.* Vol I, p 42.

<sup>4</sup> Proceedings of the Working Men's Convention. Quoted by Carlton, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

The Knights of Labour likewise insisted that the action of the toilers ought to be guided by "knowledge", and advocated the formation of an educational fund which would enable them to select and educate working men to stand for their rights.<sup>1</sup>

The official labour movement in the United States, however, did not share the educational doubts of some of its members. For the first twenty years after the decline of the Working Men's Party, humanitarian motives dominated every undertaking. Groups of working men experimented in communistic colonies, developed co-operative enterprises, supported free land movements and welcomed an introduction to Marxian Socialism. Their organizations were known as Reform Associations, Protective Unions, Benevolent Societies, and Benefit Clubs. This period was succeeded by another devoted to attempts at nationalization, such as that made by the National Labour Union in the sixties, the Knights of Labour in the seventies, and the American Federation of Labour in the eighties. Once having adopted the educational tradition of the Working Men's Party and the conviction that the public school had been the creation of labour, the working-class movement in the United States rested on its educational oars. Changes in industrial society, warnings of illiteracy figures, and comments of friendly foreign visitors passed unnoticed. Labour during the middle years of the century was completely absorbed in the task of adjusting structural and spiritual revolutions within its own organizations.

## II

The educational creed of the American Federation of Labour was no less orthodox than that of its predecessors. Each of these organizations had encountered the problem of immigration. Each, in turn, had announced

<sup>1</sup> Commons, *op. cit.*, Vol I, pp 335-341.

its belief in the necessity of education. When, however, it came to the point of putting two and two together, of drawing conclusions concerning the relation of population phenomena to the schools, and the schools to labour, working-class organizations were silent. Labour Day and convention orators never tired of referring to the public school as one of the brightest jewels in labour's crown of accomplishment. But it was considered disloyal to question the principle upon which the greatest achievement of the first American working-class movement was founded. Whenever the discussion of labour's intellectual needs digressed beyond matter-of-fact argument concerning the improvements of the physical equipment of the public school, the size of classes, teachers' salaries, and the need of vocational education,<sup>1</sup> those in authority grew restless. And soon after the principle of tax-supported education was safely established, the task of translating aspirations into reality was turned over to State authorities among whom labour men were few. Even as late as 1918, only six state boards of education contained labour members.<sup>2</sup> Nor was representation in municipal educational affairs any better. Of 204 cities having a population of over 40,000, only 17 boards of education contained representatives of labour.<sup>3</sup> Representation furthermore was usually in the proportion of one trade unionist to six or seven business or professional men.<sup>4</sup> Loyalty to equalitarian educational theory was allowed to take the place of active criticism of educational reality.

Of course, many explanations can be given for the willingness of the A.F. of L. to accept the middle-class

<sup>1</sup> Pamphlet, "Education for All. Official Record of the A.F. of L. in the Struggle to Bring Knowledge to the Masses," *passim*. (Washington, D.C.; A.F. of L., 1922)

<sup>2</sup> A.F. of L., 1918, p. 95

<sup>3</sup> The Headgear Worker, Nov. 21, 1919, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Maurer, J. H., "Labour's Demand for its Own Schools," *Nation*, Sept 20, 1922.



educational tradition of Working Men's Party, and its unwillingness to take an active part in the administrative detail of public school education. No explanation, however, can be considered as more than tentative, for neither official nor unofficial literature provides adequate material. The tremendous accomplishment of the A.F. of L. in other fields of work suggests, furthermore, that the organization was not ignoring the educational situation but was merely attempting to do first things first.

The inclination among officials of the Federation to accept the old educational creed may have been due to economic influences. Among the most important of these was the frank acceptance of the business principles in trade union affairs. With the failure of the Knights of Labour to effect a lasting centralization of the labour movement on a national scale, the vague humanitarianism of the days prior to the Civil War came to an end. In the Federation, the labour movement took on the practical complexion of the existing economic order. Ill-defined objectives and hazy methods of procedure were repudiated. High-sounding phrase-making was discarded. Neither officers nor rank and file as a whole were interested in attaining social perfectibility in some hazy Utopian future. What they wanted in Mr. Gompers' phraseology was "Better conditions to-day, better conditions to-morrow, better conditions the day after to-morrow." After 1881, the trade union movement confined its activities to the matter-of-fact activity of rendering assistance in organization, adjusting jurisdictional disputes, and developing concerted action for shorter hours and similar objectives.

The unification of craft unions, scattered over thousands of square miles of territory, with localized grievances and dissimilar tactics, required practical hands at the helm. The business man's rule of rating small but certain gains to-day over large but precarious profits of to-morrow was accordingly embraced. Vision-

ary proposals and utopian programmes were considered out of place. Business unionism was committed to small successive improvements within the existing structure of society. It undertook the realization of no ideals which could not be measured in time or money. The hard-headed men, directing that tactic, acted first and formulated theories afterwards. The support of the public school was in keeping with such methods because it cost the Federation nothing in terms of effort. Moreover, as the accomplishment of a working-class group, it brought handsome returns in the form of self-respect among members of the rank and file. Could a reformulation of the good old educational theory or a change in the public school system decrease hours or increase wages? It had not yet been proved.

The second economic influence leading to the acceptance of the educational tradition developed by the Working Men's Party, was the tactic of the Federation. It repudiated militancy and adhered to economic action. Critics of the existing order were not welcomed in the membership. Furthermore, the Federation refused to enter politics as a separate party and distrusted all the devices, among them education, by which the working class elsewhere had endeavoured to combine economic and political protest. Disapproval of political action removed the necessity of understanding the larger issues before country and group. The Federation accepted the political programme of one or the other of the American parties and then stopped. Special education in order to improve them was unnecessary. Again and again, the vigorous and restless spirits of the Federation, men who might have perceived the incompatibilities between educational practice and the needs of labour, were forced into withdrawal.<sup>1</sup>

The third economic influence in favour of sound educational doctrine was flavoured somewhat with senti-

<sup>1</sup> Foster, W Z, *The Left Wing in the American Labour Movement*. (Labour Monthly, Vol. III, No. 3, Sept. 1922, p. 156.)

ment. For the membership of the Federation, especially during the first twenty years of its existence, was related by blood or tradition with those master mechanics, small employers, and farmers, of which the Working Men's Party had been composed. From these skilled men, the conservative wing of the labour movement had inherited a sort of obligation to maintain labour's middle-class status. The organization of unskilled or immigrant labour was undertaken by the Federation only at a very late date. Consequently, any educational institution based on the middle-class shibboleth of equal opportunity, compelled their confidence. While any innovation inferring a difference in educational need based upon a difference in status incurred their opposition.

Taken all in all, however, it is quite possible that personal forces in the Federation were of more importance in educational matters than the economic environment. For Mr. Gompers has always been a real leader of men, and no opinion of his, whether well or ill-founded, has been without influence over his followers. His has stood out among his fellows, not only for his unswerving loyalty and executive ability but also for his almost unique capacity for self-expression in print and on the public platform. He has been practically the only mouthpiece of the conservative wing of the labour movement for a generation. With the exception of Mr. John Mitchell, Mr. Maurer, Mr. Macarthur, Mr. Foley and editors of trade-union organs, President Gompers has worked alone to reach the public through books and non-official magazines. Most of the editorials in the *American Federationist* since 1914 have been from his pen. Since 1910 six books have been published under his signature.<sup>1</sup> Of forty-one titles in the pamphlet literature of the Federation, he is the sole author of thirteen and the co-author with the Executive Council of three more. Only two other members of the Federa-

<sup>1</sup> Five of these were published after 1919

tion have written more than one pamphlet each.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gompers' literary work more than equals the signed publications of all other Federation authors.<sup>2</sup>

The consequences of the A.F. of L. educational orthodoxy, supported by Mr. Gompers' personal leadership, have been many and far-reaching. But among the most significant has been the indifference with which Federation officials have met the evidence of intellectual limitation among members of the rank and file. When the A.F. of L. was first organized in 1881 as the Federation of Organized Trades and Labour Unions, socialist influence was dominant. Accordingly, the following statement appeared in the preamble to the Constitution: "The history of the wage-earners of all countries is but the history of constant struggle and misery engendered by ignorance and disunion."<sup>3</sup> The organization apparently took over as its own, the customary Socialist assumption of the casual relation between ignorance and poverty. This pronouncement was followed by the suggestion that members were in need of suitable reading in order that they might "educate the masses and enable them to think and act for themselves."<sup>4</sup> During the same period the value of the labour press and the drama in educating working people in their rights was discussed,<sup>5</sup> and a prize of

<sup>1</sup> Mr Macarthur and Mr McNeill each wrote two pamphlets

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that thirty-six of the forty-one pamphlets of the Federation are still in circulation. Of these fifteen were printed twenty or more years ago, nineteen have been distributed for over twelve years; not one of the thirty-six was written in the last five years. In 1915 during the confusion incident to the war, thirteen pamphlets were published. This increase of interest in publicity was not indicative of an intellectual renaissance in the rank and file of the movement however. Nine of the fifteen bear the signature of Samuel Gompers, and the remainder, it is safe to say, especially reprints of editorials from the *American Federationist*, were inspired, if not actually, written by the same man. (Data secured from announcements of A F. of L. publications appearing from time to time in the *Federationist*)

<sup>3</sup> Proceedings, A F. of L., 1881, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Proceedings, A F. of L., 1882, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1882, p. 13

fifty dollars offered for the best essay on the subject of "Labour and Strikes".<sup>1</sup> At the end of three years, however, the offer was withdrawn. No essay worth printing had been submitted.<sup>2</sup> In 1886, with the reorganization of the Federation of Organized Trades and Labour Unions into the American Federation of Labour, all references to education in the constitution including the one cited, were stricken out.<sup>3</sup> The Federation neglected to recognize the significance of the failure of the essay contest and withdrew its official interest in the educational limitations of its membership.

The same tendency to prefer pecuniary to intellectual values obtained a few years later with reference to the educational aspect of the movement for shorter hours. The Working Men's Party had often pointed out in the 10-hour day campaign, the relationship between a shorter work-day and the need for leisure for the consideration of public questions. The Federation conducted the agitation for the 8-hour day with almost no emphasis upon the obvious opportunity for self-improvement afforded by shorter hours. The plea of a popular piece of doggerel written in 1890 as a rallying cry was typical of the A.F. of L. conception of the relation between learning and leisure.

Eight hours our song, its notes prolong,  
From ship-yard, ship, and mill  
Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest,  
Eight hours for what we will <sup>4</sup>

Once in 1882,<sup>5</sup> during the period of Socialist influence, a delegate to the Convention announced that shorter hours would "create the conditions necessary for education and the intellectual advancement of the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1883, p. 13

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1884, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1886, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> A F. of L. History, Encyclopedia, Reference Book, 1919, p. 215.  
(Washington, D C.; A F. of L., 1919.)

<sup>5</sup> Proceedings, 1882, p. 14

masses". Again in 1916 a committee discovered another educational argument. "Hours thus released from toil," it reported, "enhance the value of the man educated through leisure." The Federation as a whole, however, did not concern itself with the relationship between political efficiency and mental alertness. Education was not of interest to labour unless a pecuniary advantage to working men could be demonstrated therein.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For possible exceptions to this statement, which nevertheless do not alter the trend, see Proceedings, 1905, p 32 , 1907, pp. 30, 286.

## CHAPTER X

### THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOUR AND EDUCATIONAL DISSENTERS

“ We must not talk now of the misery of the workers but of the greater ambitions of the workers ”

*Headgear Workers' Journal.*

#### I

THE path of educational orthodoxy for the American Federation of Labour was not always smooth. In order to maintain conformity, it was necessary for officials to turn a deaf ear to the warnings of many out-spoken individuals and to ignore the evidence of their senses in the economic environment. For it was obvious to the observing both within and without the labour movement that the public school, do what it would, was unable to meet the needs of the working class as fast as industrial development brought them into being. Moreover, the public school was recognized by most people as public ; an institution where the interests of the group were merged, quite properly, with those of the community and nation. As such, could it be called upon to educate men for one trade or profession and not for another? Could it be expected to train individuals for any one side of an economic or political controversy? Many powerful groups in need of specially trained executives and leaders answered these questions with some form of privately conducted instruction, or prevailed upon educational authorities to add new subject matter to the public school curriculum.

At a very early date representatives of conservative

opinion in the United States, the manufacturers, felt called upon to supplement the slow development of the elementary school curriculum. The educational projects of English employers and the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge took root across the Atlantic soon after they were undertaken in the manufacturing towns of Great Britain. Indeed it is said that the perfect Mechanics' Institute was to be found only in the western world. They were established in the larger cities, such as Boston and New York in 1820; in the western communities of St. Louis and Lexington; in small towns such as Niagara and Amherstburg. They excelled British Institutes in the size of their libraries, the quality of their mechanical equipment, the accessibility of machines and tools to the diligent and inventive.<sup>1</sup> Evening schools had their origin, in part at least, as a continuation of the same idea.<sup>2</sup>

The spirit animating the founders of the Mechanics' Institute in England was reproduced in the United States with a peculiarly American flavour in Cooper Union, the doors of which were opened in New York City in 1859. Peter Cooper, the founder, had been in turn hatter, coach-builder, manufacturer of a wool-shearing machine, furniture dealer, glue-maker, iron-master, and investor in the first telegraph and Atlantic cable. A large part of his fortune had been derived from inventions.<sup>3</sup> Financially he had been a success,

<sup>1</sup> Hudson, *op. cit.*, pp 216-219. See also Dodd, *op. cit.*, pp 34-35. Many institutes still exist in the United States and exercise a certain local intellectual authority, through honorary representation on governing boards of nearby universities. But their primary function of educating working men has been lost. Class-rooms are filled with checker-players, lectures are cultural and desultory.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas, P. H., *American Apprenticeship and Industrial Education*, p 230. (N. Y., Columbia University, 1921.)

<sup>3</sup> Among them was a domestic mechanism which at one and the same time rocked a cradle, kept off the flies and played a music box, and a torpedo-boat to blow the Turks out of water during their war with the Greeks (Cooper, Peter, *Autobiography*. Boston, in Old South Leaflets, General Series, Vol. VI, pp. 7-8, 147.)



but the failure in early life of several projected inventions led him not only to regret his own scanty scientific education but after being told of the free Polytechnic School provided by the French Government in Paris,<sup>1</sup> to propose a similar institution in New York.

Cooper was never quite certain concerning the boundary lines between philanthropy, amusement, and education. He was unaware of the industrial revolution which had destroyed the freedom with which he had moved, always learning, from one occupation to another. Accordingly, his original plan included both trade training and provision for innocent entertainment superseding "the grosser forms of recreation which involved the waste of money and health."<sup>2</sup> He never lost sight of the fact that he wanted to inculcate thrift.<sup>3</sup> He believed that young apprentices should improve their minds instead of wasting their time in dissipation during the intervals of labour.

One floor of the Union was to be devoted to a collection of curiosities such as was offered to the public by Scudder's or Barnum's Museum. It was to include wax-work, historical relics, dwarfs, giants, living and stuffed animals. On another he planned to open, what was called at that time, a cosmorama or an exhibit of improving pictures of natural scenery, foreign cities, and the like. The whole was to be brilliantly illuminated and observed through a screen pierced with small eye-holes. The environment of Jacksonian America in which Cooper passed his youth was not only irreverent of book-learning, but without libraries. Books were seldom read and few were sold.<sup>4</sup> The only means of gathering information was by personal contact and debate. Accordingly, part of the edifice was to be cut

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24

<sup>2</sup> Raymond, R. W., *Peter Cooper*, p. 68 (Boston, Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1901)

<sup>3</sup> Cooper, Peter, *op. cit.*, p. 17

<sup>4</sup> Mencken, H. L., *The American Language*, pp. 78-79 (N.Y., Enopf, 1921)

up into small meeting rooms where the practitioners of each trade could gather and exchange information, a means by which he, himself, had learned all he knew. The flat roof was to be safely enclosed so that on pleasant days or evenings frequenters of the institution might sit or promenade there, partaking of harmless refreshments, listening to agreeable music and enjoying the magnificent prospect of the city below.<sup>1</sup>

Before embodying plans in brick or stone, however, Mr. Cooper consulted practical advice and was at length persuaded to surrender some of his most cherished ideas. The name "Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art" epitomized the transformation suffered by his original plan. Systematic instruction took the place of leisurely rambles through entertaining museums. Conversation rooms for the various trades became class rooms. The cosmorama was replaced by lecture halls and laboratories. After it was built the only solace the old gentleman found in the newer plan was the proof brought to him by the managers of different departments that students had increased their earnings through knowledge gained in the class rooms he had built.

The service of Cooper Union to the public, drawn for the most part from the lower East Side, included a free reading room, a hall dedicated to free speech,<sup>2</sup> and a complete four-year course of instruction in the sciences. The number of students in regular attendance when the first classes opened in 1859 was 986. In 1864, five were graduated from the four-year course.<sup>3</sup> In 1917 total registration during the year was 3,635, a group selected from "practically 10,000 applicants." The union has been supported by benefactions among which \$2,000,000, from Peter Cooper or his heirs

<sup>1</sup> Raymond, *op cit*, pp 69-73

<sup>2</sup> Even during the war every shade of opinion was permitted free expression in the open forums held in this hall, which was filled to overflowing with East Side audiences

<sup>3</sup> 55th Annual Report of Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, p. 16

\$600,000 from Andrew Carnegie and \$415,000 from John Halstead have been the largest.

According to the deed of trust executed in 1859 it was evidently Peter Cooper's intention that students of the union should control the discipline of the institution. "It is my desire, and I hereby ordain, that a strict conformity to rules deliberately formed by a majority vote by the students, and approved by the trustees, shall for ever be an indispensable requisite for continuing to enjoy the benefits of this institution." In his plan he anticipated the measures of self-government later adopted by many colleges. But they were not carried out. The control of the institution continued, after his death, to reside in a board of trustees made up of members of his family and other donors, notably Andrew Carnegie and J. P. Morgan.<sup>1</sup>

The next move of the manufacturers to add to the curriculum of the public school was the introduction in the late seventies of manual training. In the following decade private trade schools were established to prepare young men for industrial life.<sup>2</sup> These were followed by all the various well-known forms of industrial education now in existence.<sup>3</sup>

The manufacturers, however, were not the only groups conscious of the curricular limitations of the public school education. The socialists, although the most consistent among protagonists<sup>4</sup> of general education

<sup>1</sup> Annual Reports of Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas, *op. cit.*, pp. 177, 187-210.

<sup>3</sup> The labouring classes were at first suspicious of industrial education. After 1908, however, it was strongly advocated by the American Federation of Labour as part of their policy of business unionism.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Guthrie, W. B., *Socialism before the French Revolution*, pp. 156, 271-272 (N.Y., Macmillan, 1907) Hillquist, Morris, *Socialism in the United States*, pp. 145, 159, 169, 254, 351, 352 (N.Y., Funk and Wagnall, 1st Ed., 1903) Peixotto, J. B., *op. cit.*, pp. 210, 211, 327-328 Postgate, R. W., *Revolution, 1789-1908*. (London, Pelican Press, 1920.)

also advocated and developed supplementary educational facilities for their own members. These were completely independent of the public school system, for their founders were too realistic in their approach to educational and other social problems, to expect schools administered by capitalistic governments to teach the fundamentals of socialism.

## II

The first attack on the educational orthodoxy of the American Federation of Labour occurred in 1894 just after the failure of the great railroad strike when Mr. Gompers was trying to prevent the formation of a labour party. John Burns, a representative of British labour in Parliament and visitor to America, advised the American organization to reconsider its political position and recognize the failure of the public school to fulfil its promise to the working class. "See what steam and science have produced. Their authors have said that they would put poverty underground. Have they done it?" he asked, "Education from which so much was expected has not done it. You are taught in the schools that a man may go from 'Log House to White House.' Friends, that is no longer true (Cheers). That's the way Napoleon humbugged his soldiers on the battlefield."<sup>1</sup>

The second attack made six years later also showed signs of British influence. In 1900 Walter Vrooman, the same American, who with Professor Charles A. Beard had founded Ruskin College, Oxford, sought the assistance of the Federation in establishing a similar institution in Trenton, Missouri, to be called Ruskin Hall. Citizens of the town had already subscribed \$40,000 to the project. There were reported to be eighty students in residence and two hundred correspondents. Trade unions in Great Britain sent a

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings, A. F. of L., 1894, p. 65

delegation consisting of William Bowerman and James Sexton to Mr Gompers with an offer of a gift of \$20,000 toward the enterprise. President Gompers, however, appointed Vice-President Duncan to investigate the matter for the Executive Committee. On the latter's recommendation, which stated among other things that the Oxford workers' college was a commercial venture established not for trade unionists but for profit, the proposal was tabled and Ruskin Hall was left to its fate.<sup>1</sup>

Local records say that "Avalon College was turned over to a band of socialists under the lead of Walter Vrooman who rechristened it Ruskin College. They undertook to run not only the school, but the town as well, on socialistic principles, and got possession of a number of business institutions of the city which they ran on a co-operative plan. Their doctrines did not take with Grundy County people, and the school broke up, some of its members attempting to establish another in the suburbs of Chicago. The college building was bought for the public high school in 1908."<sup>2</sup>

During the same period the voices of local unions especially in the West were heard at every convention urging a modification of the Federation educational policy. As early as 1891 a resolution was introduced instructing all state federations to follow the example of the trade unions of Seattle, Washington, which had established a library of labour literature, "To the end that an exchange of labour papers, tracts, books, and pamphlets may be affected, and that the members of unions may have the opportunity of keeping informed upon the general labour movement and become educated in trade union principles."<sup>3</sup> From 1902 on, resolutions of a similar character were of annual occurrence. The anthracite strike prompted a delegate from Ft. Worth,

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings, A. F. of L., 1900, pp. 70, 77, 156.

<sup>2</sup> Ford, *History of Grundy County*. (Trenton, Missouri, 1900.)

<sup>3</sup> Proceedings, A. F. of L., 1891, p. 44

Texas, to recommend a lecture campaign for education among non-unionists in trade union principles.<sup>1</sup> Andrew Furuseth of San Francisco and Victor Berger of Wisconsin called the attention of Convention delegates<sup>2</sup> to certain books such as Ward's "The Ancient Lowly," Roger's "Six Centuries of Work and Wages," and Webb's "Industrial Democracy." In 1905 a delegate from Missouri proposed the immediate establishment of a lecture bureau.<sup>3</sup> The United Mine Workers asked that lecture courses be held under the auspices of central bodies "throughout the United States, Canada, and insular possessions". And Paul Scharrenberg of San Francisco urged upon labour the necessity of bringing the work of State Universities more in conformity to the needs of the working people.<sup>4</sup>

Nor was this all. In 1902, a general attack was directed by members of the Federation against hostile professors who were accused of teaching erroneous doctrines prejudicial to the "best interests of the great mass of people."<sup>5</sup> This was directly in line with the educational policy of President Gompers. As early as 1888 he had given initial utterance to an irritation, later to become chronic, with "those self-appointed preceptors to the Labour movement known as intellectuals." "There is no doubt," he said, "that much can be taught by the leaders of thought in the Labour movement; but to my mind there is more to be learned from the masses by them. . . . There is more learned by the people from actual experience than by all the speeches that could be made to them in a lifetime."<sup>6</sup> Later in enlarging upon his conviction that professors were leaving their rightful work in order to "attempt to bull-doze or dominate the labour movement," he pointed out that "the workers are not bugs to be examined under the lenses of a microscope by the 'in-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1902, pp. 97, 153

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1905, pp. 10, 291, 235.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1902, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1906, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1912, p. 262

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 1888, p. 13.

tellectuals' on a sociological slumming tour," and that "many an unschooled toiler in the ranks has an understanding of the industrial conditions and forces which make him an authority in the field."<sup>1</sup>

This is not the time to discuss the justice of these accusations. Mr. Gompers' judgment was probably 85 per cent. sound at least for the period for which he spoke. The significance of the whole situation lies in the fact that after 1902 the old educational policy of the Federation began to undergo modification. Something had happened to shake the confidence of the rank and file in the usefulness of the public school to labour. Persistent minorities were continually asserting that the organized worker needed more than a sixth grade or even grammar school education. In the course of several generations, respect for the achievement of the Working Men's Party had receded. Education had again become a living issue to the labour movement.

Confronted with this state of mind among the rank and file, Mr. Gompers, who could not afford to allow the formulation of the educational policy to slip from his hands, was compelled to adopt conciliatory measures. The attack on college professors of 1902 was supplemented by a resolution, offered by persons other than those in authority, calling for an investigation. The original resolution specified a committee of three. Mr. Gompers' first action, therefore, was to obtain personal direction of the matter, by introducing an amendment which authorized the President, himself, to collect the information and report the findings.<sup>2</sup>

The report presented the following year, with considerable formality and seriousness, is in many ways a curious document. Inspired by a man wholly distrustful of those he called intellectuals, it reversed all precedents he had taken pains to establish. Instead of seizing the opportunity for further criticism, instead of

<sup>1</sup> Gompers, *op cit*, pp. 34-35

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings, A.F. of L., 1902, pp. 165, 231.

again charging professors with a desire to dominate working-class organizations, he found excuses for them. Their failure to teach labour problems in accordance with the opinions of the Federation was ascribed not to wilful intention to mislead, but "to interest in purely theoretical or historical subjects."<sup>1</sup> And while the influence on universities of monied trustees was admitted, Mr. Gompers assured the Federation that "the college teacher inevitably imbibes some of the spirit of the age and cannot teach his subject without calling attention to some of the texts of the liberal books and articles bearing upon it."<sup>2</sup> Never before or after, have teachers in universities received treatment as gentle from the hands of Mr. Gompers.

His next action in response to the revival of interest in education was the elevation of the Standing Committee on Education to a position of importance by the appointment of John Mitchell as chairman.<sup>3</sup> Following that he confessed with regret that there was not "as wide . . . a knowledge . . . of the history, the struggles, the methods, and the work of our movement as should be;" nor, were trade unionists in general able to defend themselves against the intellectual assaults of those whose actual experience was much narrower. For that reason, he recommended that local bodies establish trade union schools where at least the elementary principles of the trade union movement might be taught.<sup>4</sup> Finally, he reported that as President, he had already co-operated in a campaign for giving lectures in the evening schools, which he regarded as potential "working men's universities."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1903, p. 29

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1903, p. 29

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1903, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1905, p. 27

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1904, p. 31 The attitude of the Federation toward industrial education was also slowly modified. Safeguards were sought to prevent the system from being perverted to purposes of exploitation. The Convention of 1917 demanded in addition to vocational training, the teaching of "unemasculated industrial history," including "an accurate account of the organization of workers and the results thereof." (Douglas, *op. cit.*, p. 322)



This was a tremendous step forward for the Federation. By taking it, Mr. Gompers broke with the educational tradition of the Working Men's Party. He admitted that something more was needed by the workers than an equal opportunity to obtain elementary instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic. Compromise with the intellectually dissatisfied elements did not mean, however, that the Federation had been finally converted to the necessity of Workers' Education in the strict sense of the word. There is no record of the establishment of trade union schools at this date, and no lectures were ever given in a "Working Men's University."

The pressure which ultimately placed Workers' Education upon the official programme of the American Federation of Labour came neither from England nor from the West. It came from two large groups within the organization itself, to whom the old provocations of social, political, economic and educational exclusion had at length become intolerable.

### III

The first working-class groups in the United States to recognize the relationship between economic disability and educational deprivation were women who worked and certain new European additions to the American labour supply. From some points of view the problems of these two old subject classes seem miles apart. The low estate of the one was due to sex; of the other, to race. The demand for education among women was clearly associated with the desire to elevate a status which had always been low; the desire for knowledge among the Jews was animated by a longing to retrieve a dignity which had once been high. When, however, each became part of the American industrial proletariat they found themselves similarly situated. For the establishment by the Pilgrim Fathers of the principle

of education for community responsibility concerned male church members then resident in the colonies. Puritan women were home-workers with few legal or political rights. The programme of equal educational opportunity for identical educational need was framed by the Working Men's Party to affect a similar sex and racial group. When conditions changed, women continued to be excluded from a share in the direction of the common life, and with their alien fellow-workers were discouraged, regardless of working-class affiliation, from active participation in the formulation of trade union policy.

Of course, the American Federation of Labour never went to the length of excluding working women from membership. It merely treated the solution of their problems as it did all other social questions not amenable to business analysis, as a subject for public declamation and private neglect. The menace of low paid female labour to the standard of living was recognized. Women were admitted to the Federation whenever they were admitted to constituent unions. The necessity for organizing them was acknowledged. But when it came to the point of substituting action for proclamation, the Federation held its hands. Women members of unions were not welcome to hold office. Nor was a convincing effort made to decrease the number of those who had never been unionized.

There seemed to be an inclination, on the contrary, to throw the burden of organization upon the women themselves.<sup>1</sup> The President of the Federation expressed himself in 1888, as being in favour of encouraging organizations among women so that they might "learn the stern fact that if they desire to achieve any improvement . . . it must be through their own self-assertion." And in 1890 when the first woman delegate to a national convention introduced a resolution

<sup>1</sup> Nestor, Agnes, *Ushering in the New Day*, p 169. (Life and Labour, June, 1921.)

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calling for the appointment of a number of women organizers to carry on the work of organization among women, the suggestion was favourably received, but no action was taken. At three successive conventions similar resolutions were adopted. They resulted in the appointment of a woman organizer in 1891 who worked for nine months; the employment nine years later in 1900 of another organizer and assistant editor of the *Federationist*; and the assignment of a woman to work for a short time in 1908 among the non-union women workers of Chicago.<sup>1</sup> Although for twenty years the Federation endorsed the principle of organizing women, it paid the salary of a woman organizer for only two and one-half. It has been well said that women unionists have suffered from "the endorsement rather than the application of principle."<sup>2</sup>

To a certain extent, the policy, adopted by the Federation, with respect to the trade union organization of women was, like its educational policy, an inheritance. The entrance of women into the factory had come suddenly with the industrial revolution. The only person who could view the female operative with detachment was her employer. To him, she had but one function, that of a semi-mechanical accessory to the machine, whose field of usefulness was restricted by nothing but the quantity and quality of her product. To every other man, trade unionist and non-trade unionist alike, she remained more woman than worker; a creature, whose industrial vocation had not received the benediction of tradition. Such men preferred to deny the existence of the problem rather than to

<sup>1</sup> Andrews, J B, and Bliss, W D P., *History of Women in Trade Unions*, pp. 155-156. (61st Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Document No 645. Report on conditions of women and child wage-earners in the United States Washington Government Printing Office, Vol X, 1911.) See also Henry, Alice, *The Trade Union Woman*, pp 37-88. (N.Y., Appleton, 1915)

<sup>2</sup> Van Kleeck, Mary. Address, *The Working Woman and the New Social Vision*, p. 221. Life and Labour, Dec. 1919.

undertake the confusing task of modifying habitual judgments.

On the other hand, the few men trade unionists who believed that the situation could be met by organization, were balked by the women themselves. Even after they had once been organized, they drifted in and out of the unions as easily as they shifted from job to job. Low pay, irregular work and home duties sapped their vitality. The prospect of marriage made their future as workers a matter of indifference. Women shared with the unskilled, of whom they formed a part, an incapacity for sustained collective effort. To the guardians of Federation funds, who expected a dividend in terms of permanent membership for every dollar spent on organizers' salaries, women were a poor risk. According to the estimates of business unionism, less was lost to the movement through a policy of inactivity in organizing them than might be wasted by useless effort.

Of course, working women were accustomed to being thrown back upon their own resources. Enforced independence of the men's branch of the trade union movement did not necessarily entail discouragement. But it did change the tactics and destination of trade unionism among women. The kinship which existed between their movement for the removal of economic disabilities and other branches of the woman movement seeking general political, educational, and social participation was emphasized. An historical alliance between philanthropy and trade unionism, which the general labour movement had been able to shake off, was perpetuated. The trade-union woman found that she needed not only better wages and shorter hours, but the vote and education as well.

Prior to the time when male unionists adopted the tactics of business unionism, men's and women's organizations had developed along more or less parallel lines. Trade unionism among women in the United

States is quite as old and, where it exists at all, quite as strong as trade unionism among men. But persistent exclusion of women from social, educational, and political participation in the common life of the community and of the labour movement left them at this juncture just where they had begun. A clear-cut demand restricted to economic issues such as that formulated both by socialist groups and by the American Federation of Labour covered only a part of the situation. Working-women were encumbered with even more fundamental disabilities, upon the removal of which, economic improvement was contingent. For this reason and in the absence of concrete aid from the general trade union movement, women's unions retained what was left of the old useful alliance between labour and benevolence. They not only supported co-operative enterprises, exchanged delegates with equal suffrage associations, and endorsed religious organization in their efforts to relieve destitute women, but also accepted financial assistance from sympathetic onlookers.<sup>1</sup> What men's unions had done until political and educational equality man with man, had approximated fact, women's unions continued to do. They sought and accepted the aid of benevolence, through which useful contacts were made not only with generous liberals but also with the movement for the political franchise.

The interest of women workers in education is as old as the American woman worker herself. It dates from the entrance into cotton mills of the daughters of New England farmers and professional men. In fact, trade unionism among these earliest women operatives seemed to exist less to redress economic grievances than to raise an educational status. In 1825 women workers were of revolutionary stock. The tradition of resistance to oppression was fresh and inspiring. They struck often and conducted their protests with

<sup>1</sup> Andrews and Bliss, *op cit*, *passim*.

a knowledge of advertising values unknown to the foreign-born women workers of a later industrial period. At the hour appointed it was characteristic of them to issue forth in a body from the factory doors, startling the inhabitants of their quiet villages into sympathy by singing and shouting :<sup>1</sup>

"Let oppression shrug her shoulder  
And the haughty tyrant frown,  
And little upstart Ignorance  
In mockery look down.  
Yet I value not the feeble threats,  
Of Tories in disguise,  
While the flag of Independence  
Over our noble nation flies " <sup>2</sup>

"Little upstart Ignorance" in the verse was not referred to by accident nor merely for the sake of metre. It is said that the factory town of Lowell might have been looked upon as a rather select industrial school<sup>3</sup> for young women who had come to work with their hands in order to have the opportunity of working with their heads. Many spent only the winter at work and taught school in summer.<sup>4</sup> Their interests were so pre-eminently mental that mill superintendents, in order to keep them contented, permitted books to be read in clothrooms where there were no machines.<sup>5</sup> Their hours of leisure were divided between attending classes of their own "getting up"<sup>6</sup> in German, theology, botany, literature, and writing articles on "Gentility," "Sympathy," and "Thoughts on Beauty" for the Lowell Offering or the Operatives Magazine, two periodicals edited and supported by cotton mill girls.<sup>7</sup> New England women cotton operatives were the educational pace-setters for all working women who followed them.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p 22

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p 28.

<sup>3</sup> Larcom, Lucy, *A New England Girlhood*, pp 222-223. (Boston, Houghton, Mifflin Co, 1890.)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 210

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 230.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 223

<sup>7</sup> Dickens, Chas, *American Notes*, Vol II, p. 66 (N.Y, Sheldon, 1865.)

As the century wore on, however, changing industrial conditions, the influx of the foreign-born, and the development of the labour movement dictated a revision of educational ideals. After 1840 the interest of working women in cultural education declined. In its place, they sought information concerning the industrial system of which they formed a part, instruction in methods of organization, and command of the English language. Women operatives in Lowell, about that time, established an Industrial Reform Association which secured for the benefit of any who would listen, the best speakers in the country on subjects dealing with the labour movement.<sup>1</sup> Women in other localities followed their example. In Manchester, New Hampshire, a similar organization engaged a public lecturer to assist their own speakers in "diffusing a spirit of union." Meetings were held weekly at which papers were read, discussed and sent on to editors favourable to the cause.<sup>2</sup> Unionism among women had become more practical. The unsuccessful termination of many strikes provoked search for the cause. Trade union women endeavoured not only to improve themselves but to interpret the economic aspect of their movement to women and the public at large.

To dismiss the forty- or fifty-year period following the organization of Reform Associations with the comment that unionism among women remained at a standstill, seems dangerously superficial. Nevertheless, such was broadly the case. In spite of verbal encouragement from the National Labour Union, the organization by the Knights of Labour of a Department of Women's Work,<sup>3</sup> the appearance of women delegates at many national conventions, and the unselfish devotion of innumerable women and men to the cause, women responded slowly to the appeals of the movement. The establishment of interunion communication on a national

<sup>1</sup> Andrews and Bliss, *op cit*, p 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p 115

scale absorbed the energies of the best executives and organization merely for the sake of expanding membership became, for a long period, of more or less secondary importance. For this reason the high water mark of female trade union membership did not occur until 1902. Even at that time organized women (15,509), never formed more than 4.8 per cent.<sup>1</sup> of the total number of trade union members and an even smaller proportion of the one million odd women gainfully employed.<sup>2</sup> Although many crafts in which women predominated, such as the Tobacco Workers' International Union, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and others, maintained a continuous and vigorous policy of organization, the problem was not attacked on a national intercraft scale. Women's unions were then where men's unions had been a third or one-half a century before, subjected to the same obstacles, pursuing the same methods.

The situation was not faced with any degree of determination until the establishment of the National Women's Trade Union League in Boston in 1903. Although the immediate inspiration for the founding of the organization was derived from the British Women's Trade Union League,<sup>3</sup> it was in reality the successful culmination of a long series of American efforts begun in the eighties. In 1886 a group of women, calling themselves the Working Women's Society, was founded in New York City for the purpose of inquiring into and finding remedies for poor working conditions. It was composed of operatives and women of independent means and positions. They declared it to be their intention to gather together all those devoted to the cause of organizing women, to collect

<sup>1</sup> Andrews and Bliss, *op cit*, p. 146. Judging by the figures of unionization in New York State there has been a tremendous increase of organization among women since this date (Henry, *op cit*, p. 41)

<sup>2</sup> Abbott, Edith, *Women in Industry*, p. 358. (N.Y., Appleton, 1919)

<sup>3</sup> Henry, *op. cit*, p. 62.



and publish facts, and to undertake a campaign of education amongst the more fortunate classes in the community. A similar attempt was made in Chicago in the nineties.

The first to welcome the idea of forming a Women's Trade Union League in Boston was Mary Kenny O'Sullivan, a bindery woman. With her were associated not only garment workers, clerks, shoe workers, and textile operatives, but also Jane Addams, Mary M'Dowell, Lillian Wald, Leonora O'Reilly, and their friends.<sup>1</sup> The idea took. During the following year two branches were established, one in Chicago and one in New York. The first meeting in Chicago at which Mary M'Dowell of the University Settlement was elected president, was called to order by Jane Addams. The first president in New York City was Mary Dreier. Started "by a band of enthusiasts who believed that the non-industrial person could be of service to her industrial sister in helping her to find her way through the chaos of industry,"<sup>2</sup> those women resolved to unite in one national organization, regardless of trade union affiliation, all working women and their friends.

Formally the League proposed to organize all female workers into unions, then to secure equal citizenship for women, an eight-hour day, equal pay for equal work, and a living wage.<sup>3</sup> From the experience acquired in several great strikes in which a large number of girls were involved, it confined its practical efforts, however, to the organization and direction of public opinion, patrolling the streets, securing fair play in the courts, and helping to raise funds.<sup>4</sup> The service of wealthy "allies"<sup>5</sup> in opening up channels of publicity, in pre-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, *passim*

<sup>2</sup> Dreier, Mary E., *Expansion through Agitation and Education*. Life and Labour, June, 1921, p 163.

<sup>3</sup> Henry, *op cit*, p. 85

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p 67

<sup>5</sup> The active membership of the League was composed of organized women or women eligible by occupation for organization. These women paid small dues and, according to constitutional provision,

serving traditions of fair play in the handling of women pickets, providing bonds for arrested girls and "standing for the principles of democracy" was invaluable. Compared with the progress made by women workers before it entered the field, the League was immensely successful in its organization work. In 1908 it had placed women organizers in four cities<sup>1</sup> and with the support of 61 international unions induced the Federation to appoint another.<sup>2</sup>

But organization was discovered to be a more complex undertaking than had at first appeared. Many women could not be made to see the value of union membership. The more they needed collective action the less power had they to grasp its principles and maintain an unbroken front. The League confronted the old vicious circle of trade unionism in a particularly stubborn form. For women formed a large percentage of the exploited who consistently respond less readily to the logic of organization than the better paid who are accustomed to a measure of security. Among women as among men the end to be attained by organization was often the condition of attainment. It was plain that women could not be organized in large numbers until the conditions of life and work which were to be obtained alone by trade union action made unionism possible.

It became apparent, furthermore, that although the best organizers among women were women, the supply was narrowly limited. The contention of the A.F. of L. that women were mentally unprepared for the exact-

always formed a majority on committees. A sort of associate membership was arranged for so-called "allies," or men and women who did not support themselves as operatives in the industrial process but believed in the organization of labour and the general purposes of the League. The League received a certain amount of financial support from the A.F. of L. and friendly central bodies. Allies, however, were usually wealthy and public-spirited. Without large gifts from them the organization could not have survived

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings, A.F. of L., 1908, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings, N.W.T.U.L., 1909, p. 7.

ing demands of the work was recognized by the League to be more than half true. Unions had been unwilling either to employ inexperienced people or to arrange an apprenticeship period during which experience could be obtained. The League, therefore, undertook a campaign of instruction which soon took the form of Workers' Education.

At the first biennial convention held in Norfolk in 1907, a recommendation was made that each local league establish classes for the discussion of the struggle going on between workers and employers.<sup>1</sup> In 1911 the New York League carried the matter a step further by proposing a series of pamphlets for class use on such subjects as the "Development of Society," "The History of Industry," "Land, Labour, Capital, Rent, Wages, Profits," "The Structure of Trade Unions in America," and "The History of the Labour Movement in England and America." In the same year after the great garment strike, the Chicago League offered instruction to foreign-born working women<sup>2</sup> in which English and trade unionism were taught at the same time.<sup>3</sup>

In 1914<sup>4</sup> the League hit upon the device of a School for Organizers to train women for their trade union vocation. The school was opened in Chicago with three students.<sup>5</sup> Classes were organized, with the

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings, N.W.T.U.L., 1907      <sup>2</sup> Nestor, *op cit*, p 170.

<sup>3</sup> Robins, Margaret Drier, "Educational Plans of the N.W.T.U.L." Leaflet reprinted from *Life and Labour*, June, 1914

<sup>4</sup> Dreier, Mary E Address to A.F. of L. Reprinted in *Life and Labour*, Dec 1914, p. 364 Credit is probably due to Mrs. Raymond Robins, President of the League for 15 of its 19 years of existence As a woman of independent means she was able to familiarize herself with the W.E.A. and similar enterprises on the Continent In 1914 an article from her pen describing European methods of working-class education, probably the first on the subject to be published in the United States, appeared in *Life and Labour*

<sup>5</sup> They were Louisa Mittelstadt and Myrtle Whitehead, brewery workers, and Fannia Cohen, garment worker, since become one of the leading educators in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (Henry, *op cit*, p 75)

assistance of nearby universities, to give them a systematic knowledge of the movement in which they were to work, and the American Federation of Labour assisted the School for the Organizers with a gift of money.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV

The history of Workers' Education among the Jews is similar to that among women. Its development in each case was due to a desire to secure emancipation from burdensome, economic, and social disabilities and to aid trade union organization. As aliens, however, the Jews laboured under the additional difficulties of the foreign-born. Customs, dress, language, and so forth, which in the old community were signs of self-respect, became in the new, the occasion of contempt and humiliation.<sup>2</sup> As the most depressed and dependent nationality in Europe, they brought with them to the United States all forms of the Freudian baffled wish and a diminished sense of personality.<sup>3</sup> These factors together with racial homogeneity, industrial solidarity, and an intellectual tradition tended ultimately to strengthen collective action. Educational undertakings were pursued with great vigour and endurance, and the American Federation of Labour was finally forced to capitulate to the new movement.

The peak of Jewish immigration was reached after 1881 during the period of persecution in Russia and Poland. By that time free land was a thing of the past in the United States. The new residents were compelled, with other new immigrants, to find their living in the large cities of the Atlantic seaboard. Familiarity with the tailor's craft in the old country<sup>4</sup> led them

<sup>1</sup> Dreier, *op cit*, p 364.

<sup>2</sup> Park, R E, and Miller, H A., *Old World Traits Transplanted*, pp 47-48. (N.Y., Harper, 1921)

<sup>3</sup> Park, R E, and Miller, H. A. *Ibid*, pp. 96-97

<sup>4</sup> Joseph, Samuel, *Jewish Immigration in the United States*, p 123. (N Y, Columbia University Studies, in Vol LIX, 1914)

without delay into the clothing trades. In a few years they had become the backbone of the largest industry (combined with the textile),<sup>1</sup> in the country and the largest immigrant community in existence.

The rapid expansion of the industry, however, was not accompanied by an equally rapid trade union development. On the contrary, organization was retarded by the fact that any ambitious cutter or designer possessed all the knowledge necessary to set up for himself. Furthermore, every tenement household became a factory on seven-day work, in which the majority of the workers, with the exception of cutters and designers, were women. When the latter were married, their lives were divided between housework and garment industry. When unmarried, they were completely absorbed in the business of attaining that state. These circumstances, together with traditional individualism, lack of education, and a continuous stream of new immigrants in pecuniary distress, made organization a Herculean task. The language and customs of the new country remained a mystery and racial isolation increased.

Although garment strikes occurred frequently only one needle-trade union, the United Garment Workers, was able to maintain existence. A strike at the beginning of the season, when every worker was needed was often won. When work fell off, concessions were withdrawn. Few men were hardy enough to protest alone. Unable to pay dues union members dropped out between busy seasons. Eventually the union itself vanished, only with great labour to be replaced by another, when the cycle began again.<sup>2</sup>

Jewish workers were saved to trade unionism by their intellectual heritage and by the first affiliations they made upon arrival in the United States. Other

<sup>1</sup> Budish and Soule, *The New Unionism*, p. 16 (N Y, Harcourt, 1920.)

<sup>2</sup> Budish and Soule, *op cit.*, pp 68-100.

language groups had had to create their intellectuals from a second generation born of peasant parents. The Jews of Russia and Poland brought their own.<sup>1</sup> All classes were represented among Jewish immigrants, village artisans, city merchants, labourers, and learned men. The Jewish population in Russia in 1897 contained one and one-half times as many literates as the total population.<sup>2</sup> Half of the immigrants from the professional classes were either musicians or teachers,<sup>3</sup> while of those who came to America in the early eighties, a number were students who had participated in the revolutionary agitation preceding the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881. Their practice in the old country had been to go among the common people spreading their views concerning the millennium they believed to be at hand.<sup>4</sup>

The only residents of the United States with which such men could discover a common bond of fellowship were the Germans, who during the middle years of the century had formed the labour supply of the clothing industry. Among these were immigrants of 1848 who were political refugees and educated men. Expelled from the Fatherland for supporting Continental revolutionary movements they directed their enthusiasm to forming secret societies, working men's educational clubs and agnostic unions for the discussion of social problems and political freedom.<sup>5</sup> In 1851 there were 77 Turnvereins in the country committed to a programme of physical training and education in socialist principles. The Baltimore Socialist Democratic Turnverein was the largest with 278 members. Cincinnati

<sup>1</sup> Park, R. E., *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*, pp. 92-93. (N Y, Harper, 1922.)

<sup>2</sup> Joseph, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141

<sup>4</sup> Park, *op. cit.*, p. 196. See also Wiernik, P., *The Intellectual Type of the Russian Jew*, pp 38-39. New Era, Feb. 1904.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261. See also Hillquit, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

claimed 222 and New York 128.<sup>1</sup> Unable to pursue intellectual professions in a new country, many of these men drifted into the clothing trades where by means of personal contact, the Yiddish press and rudimentary trade unions they became the cultural nucleus around which transplanted Jewish students clustered.

Under such leadership the most persistent demand of the Jewish clothing workers was for education. In the old country their reverence for learning and their desire to raise their economic and political status had led them to grant special privileges to young men studying for rabbinate.<sup>2</sup> In the new country the conflict between the older and younger generation arising out of the process of assimilation, and the severance of religious and parental ties caused American-Jewish youths to revert to the old traditions of scholarship in order to find a way out. The East Side of New York City was torn by controversy. Trade union meetings were carried on far into the night by debates concerning the relative applicability to life in a modern city of three current schools of thought.<sup>3</sup> Many newspapers were established of which the four strongest have a combined circulation of over 350,000. A literary revival in the Yiddish language took place in which love, science, and radicalism were the chief topics.<sup>4</sup> The younger generation espoused socialism and what had begun in Europe as a movement of the intelligentsia ended in America, through the language press and self-education, as a mass movement.<sup>5</sup>

Several experiments in education were made by

<sup>1</sup> Hillquit, *op. cit.*, p. 261. See also Faust, A. B., *The German Element in the United States*, Vol. II, p. 390 (N. Y., Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1909). He places the total membership of Turnvereins in 1859 at 8300 in 152 societies.

<sup>2</sup> Cahan, A. Fiction—*The Rise of David Levinsky*, *The Imported Bridegroom*, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Budish and Soule, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

<sup>4</sup> Park, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-122. See also Wiener, Leo, *The History of Yiddish Literature in the 19th Century* (London, 1899.)

<sup>5</sup> Park, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

Jewish workers in the first decade of the twentieth century. Among these was the Workers' School established in 1899 by Drs Peskin, I. N. Stone, and A. Ingeman. Courses in economics, the sciences and socialism were given for several years, after which the School was reorganized into the Workers' Educational League. In 1901, John Deitsch organized the Jewish Workers' League for the purpose of studying industrial and economic problems from a non-partisan standpoint.<sup>1</sup> In 1899 systematic instruction similar to that given later in labour colleges was begun by Thomas Davidson.

Davidson was a Scotchman, born in Aberdeen in 1840 and educated in the University of that city where he acquired the habits of exact scholarship. A born dissenter, he could not and would not fit into any academic niche. Opportunities for University teaching came but he elected the life of an intellectual free-lance, earning his livelihood lecturing, writing, and teaching private classes during which he took time for leisurely study and long visits to Europe.<sup>2</sup> In the course of his ramblings he found time to organize the Fellowship of the New Life in London, a branch of which a few months later became the Fabian Society. He was a friend of philosophers and economists on both sides of the water. But he regarded University students, animated by the single wish to fit themselves for a comfortable berth in life, as unpromising material. Only during the last years of his life did he succeed in finding a class of students with whom he could work with entire satisfaction.

In the winter of 1900 this man was asked to give four lectures in Cooper Institute to an audience composed largely of working men and women. The place of meeting was later changed and he found himself

<sup>1</sup> Budish and Soule, *op cit*, p 209.

<sup>2</sup> Davidson, Thomas, *The Education of the Wage Earners*, p. 5. (N.Y., Ginn, 1904) See also James, Wm, *Thomas Davidson: A Knight Errant of the Intellectual life, in Memoirs and Studies*, pp. 75-103. (N.Y., 1911.)



facing an East Side audience of Russian, Polish, and Hungarian Jews. Having been warned that his hearers would be made up of Marxian socialists, anarchists, single-taxers, and the like, he chose a subject as free of controversy as possible, namely, "The Problem Which the 19th Century Hands over for Solution to the 20th." He took care to state before opening the lecture that he had not come to teach, but to enumerate, classify, and explain. Accordingly, although it was followed by a shower of questions, they were, in his own words, "good-natured, completely serious and deserving of utmost consideration." This lecture was succeeded by many others, which formed the instruction offered by what came to be known as the Breadwinners' College.

The students who came to Davidson's classes ranged all the way from proprietors of news stands and sweatshops to students in the city college, the normal school and Columbia University. Their needs were as different as their conditions. It was difficult to find work which all the members of a class could share with profit. But because all were interested in history and sociology, Davidson's plan was to make them do as much work as possible, confining himself to imparting impetus and direction. Accordingly, he devised a "panorama" of work consisting of readings, essay writing, map making, and recitations, to display on its completion social evolution in all its phases, intellectual, moral, religious, political, and economic. The biographies of Aristotle, Bacon, Kant, Herder, Goethe, Mirabeau, Lieber, Emerson, Tennyson, and George Eliot were suggested. Definitions of terms frequently used in debate and often misunderstood, such as society, people, nature, sociology, socialism, institution, person, individual, duty, religion, progress, evolution, and science, were developed by discussion. Races, epochs, and world religions were studied with maps of the ancient world. After all of this was pieced together, Davidson hoped the burning social and economic questions of the day

would come to be seen in their true proportion, and his students would recognize their own places and rôles.<sup>1</sup>

For Davidson had no sympathy with the contention of "labour" that outward circumstances governed life. He thought that given a soul, a man could work out his own happiness under any set of conditions.<sup>2</sup> In fact, part of his charm to his curious audience, in addition to his intellectual power, was his insusceptibility to classification. According to his own statement he was too much of an anarchist to be a socialist, and too much of a socialist to be an anarchist. And his support of Henry George, he insisted, was due to admiration of the man's character and not to his advocacy of the single tax.<sup>3</sup> As a result of his effort, one young man, among others, sent in intelligent epitomes of Darwin's "Origin of Species," Drummond's "Ascent of Man," and Max Müller's "Lectures on the Science of Language."<sup>4</sup> An essay written on Aristotle's "Poetics" by a young woman from Southern Russia who made her living with scissors and needle, occupied the class for four or five evenings; while another on "Religion" by a clerk in a hat factory was "full of earnestness" and showed that the writer had grasped the heart of the matter.<sup>5</sup>

After the death of Davidson the enthusiasm which had helped to make the Breadwinners' College so important a factor in the intellectual ferment in the East Side of New York City continued. Class, lectures, and educational committees were organized in local unions. When in 1914, the task of creating stable unions and a loyal rank and file was approaching a satisfactory conclusion, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union led the way in establishing the Workers' University, and secured for the undertaking, the blessing of the American Federation of Labour.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, pp 100-105

<sup>2</sup> Knight, Wm, *Memoirs of Thos Davidson, the Wandering Scholar*, p. 115 (Boston, Ginn, 1907.)

<sup>3</sup> Davidson, *op. cit*, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p 113.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*. p. 117.

## CHAPTER XI

### CONTEMPORARY WORKERS' EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

IN spite of the retarded development of class consciousness, the modifying influence of a middle-class educational tradition, and the obstructive tactics of the American Federation of Labour, Workers' Education in the United States has become a fact. Twenty years after the foundation of the Breadwinners' College and the School for Organizers, two hundred separate classes for the instruction of working men and women had opened their doors. In 1924 these agencies were scattered from coast to coast, in thirty-one states and thrice as many cities. In New York City there were over twenty; in Boston, five; in Chicago five.<sup>1</sup> Twenty-five thousand men and women are said to have been enrolled.

With the exception of the schools organized by the women workers and the Jewish clothing unions, none of them, however, traced their lineage to earlier experiments in the United States. Nor were they begun early in the twentieth century. The educational ideals of Thomas Davidson fell for fifteen years on sterile soil. The movement did not actually get under way until the outbreak of war in Europe.<sup>2</sup> And for a time thereafter, the inspiration of leaders seemed to be drawn from British rather than American sources.

Considered for purposes of convenience from the

<sup>1</sup> Workers' Education Year Book, 1924 (N Y, W E.B., 1924, pp. 42, 168-179.)

<sup>2</sup> Prior to 1918 there had been but three experiments in existence. (Epstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 1307-1309)

point of view of origin, agencies for Workers' Education in the United States seem to fall into five main groups, namely, those organized by (1) the socialists, (2) the universities, (3) the trade unions, (4) the women, and (5) the Jewish clothing workers.<sup>1</sup>

The interest of socialists in education has been perennial. Robert Owen's influence was felt in the United States almost as soon as in England. The members of early Owenite Communities bestowed much attention upon the education of their children and their own culture. Their schools were superior to those of neighbouring towns.<sup>2</sup>

The German immigrants of 1848 formed working men's educational clubs. The International Working Men's Association, organized in 1881 announced its object to be "to print, publish, and to circulate labour literature; to hold mass meetings; to systematize agitation; to establish labour libraries, labour halls, and lyceums for discussing Social Science; to maintain a labour press."<sup>3</sup> The Knights of Labour borrowed the Chartist slogan,—*Agitate, educate, organize*,"<sup>4</sup> and every socialist organization recognized education as a necessary preliminary either to Parliamentary action or to revolution.

At the present time Workers' Education under socialist auspices takes two forms depending upon whether the group initiating instruction belongs to the left or to the right wing. Every large city possesses a group of left wing educational enterprises. In Chicago, for instance, there is the Hobo College, I.W.W. study circles, the Workers' Educational Association, the Soviet School,<sup>5</sup> and probably many more. Each of

<sup>1</sup> The following discussion makes no attempt to be exhaustive. A more complete list of agencies may be found in the Workers' Education Year Book, 1924.

<sup>2</sup> Hillquirt, *op cit*, 1st edition, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 254.

<sup>4</sup> Commons, J. R., *History of Labour*, pp. 198, 319, 335.

<sup>5</sup> Walton, Dorothy, *A Hobo College and its Kin*. Life and Labour, Dec. 1920, p. 305.

these differs from the other in the shade of socialist doctrine taught or the nationality of membership. Many are conducted wholly in foreign languages or offer classes in English for foreign-born members. In Duluth, the Industrial Workers of the World have recently taken over the Working People's College, an enterprise organized in 1913 by a group of Finnish workers who were members of that organization. Courses are held in the usual social subjects. There is accommodation for 60 students.<sup>1</sup>

The most representative example of right-wing socialist Workers' Education is, of course, the Rand School of Social Science in New York City. This school, founded in 1906, is one of the oldest and strongest enterprises for educating working men and women in the United States. Its founders, inspired by the success of Ruskin College, Oxford, were either members of the Socialist Party or sympathizers with the socialist movement. For a time, it was financed on the income derived from the Rand Fund.<sup>2</sup> Later, as the result of the withdrawal by maturing heirs of their respective quotas, the Fund ceased to yield any appreciable revenue to the school. At present, the undertaking is supported by contributions and bequests from co-operating individuals and organizations. Among the latter are the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the Ladies' Garment Workers, the Workmen's Circle and the Forward Publishing Company.<sup>3</sup> The School is conducted by the American Socialist Society, a body incorporated under the laws of the State of New York, whose constitution provides that only such persons are eligible to membership as accept the principles of the socialism. In practice, all or nearly all students are also members of the Socialist Party.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *International Labour Review*, June 1923, p. 978. *Industrial Solidarity* (Chicago), December 23, 1922, January 6, 1923.

<sup>2</sup> Established by Mrs. Carrie Rand Herron and her daughter.

<sup>3</sup> *Bulletin of the Rand School of Social Science*, 1918-1919, p. 4, 1922-1923, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> 1st N.C.W.E., 1921, p. 25. 2nd N.C.W.E., 1922, p. 45.

Facilities are offered to the general public for studying the principles, purposes, methods, and problems of socialism and organized labour. At the same time adherents of these movements receive such instruction and training as will help to make them more efficient workers for the cause. It does not follow, however, that what goes on in its class rooms and lecture halls is "propaganda" in the ordinary sense of the word. The Rand School has laid down the rule that the teaching staff ought, so far as is humanly possible, to avoid a doctrinaire attitude and to welcome pertinent questions and expressions of doubt. The course of study provides for students who wish information in the natural sciences, anthropology, literature and music. They are urged to enjoy the gymnasium and recreational facilities of the building.

Attendance has constantly increased. In 1906, 250 students enrolled; in 1916-1917, something over 1500. In 1918 attendance ranged from 1500 to 2000 a week. Forty or more instructors of high academic standing are giving whole or part time to the work.<sup>1</sup> Fees are low and many scholarships are provided by funds or friendly trade unions.

The vast majority of the student body in the Rand School is composed of wage-workers. Persons employed in the needle trades form the largest single industrial group. Next come the stenographers, book-keepers, clerks, and other office workers. Few of the students are under twenty years of age and comparatively few are over thirty-five. Both sexes are always well represented, each contributing from 40 to 60 per cent., year by year, of the whole number of students. The student body is highly international, and in this it reflects the composition of the wage-working class in the United States and particularly in New York.<sup>2</sup> While the American born form the largest single group,

<sup>1</sup> Rand School of Social Science Bulletin, 1920-1921.

<sup>2</sup> Rand School of Social Science Bulletin, 1922-1923, pp. 5-6

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classes also include natives of Austria, Canada, China, Chile, Czecho-Slovakia, Denmark, Dutch Guiana, England, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Rumania, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland and Wales.

(2) Another form of Workers' Education in the United States corresponding in a marked degree with the British tutorial class system has been organized by faculty groups in certain universities. In 1920 the central labour unions of Springfield and Holyoke, Massachusetts, were approached by Amherst professors and a tentative plan for conducting workers' classes drafted and adopted.<sup>1</sup> As a result of this meeting an executive committee of fourteen was formed, nine members representing labour organizations and five representing Amherst College. One of the latter was appointed executive secretary and attended committee meetings in a purely advisory capacity.

It was resolved to lay down procedure for one year only, in order not to perpetuate any mistakes which might be made at the outset.<sup>2</sup> During the winter of 1920-1921, in response to requests made by the students,

<sup>1</sup> May, F. S., "Amherst Classes for Workers," 1st N C W E, 1921, pp 33-35; 2nd N C W E, 1922, pp 23-27.

<sup>2</sup> Rules for the conduct of the classes were drawn up as follows : (1) Instruction to be given by members of the faculty of Amherst College ; (2) Each group to be self-administering, to select its subject for study, confirm the executive committee's choice of instructor, establish and enforce its own standard of work, decide upon the disposition of the fees of its members, and regulate all other details connected with its work , (3) Instructor to plan and conduct work, with the advice and consent of the class or of a class committee. In all matters instructor to deal directly with the class, or if the class so elects, through representatives of its own choosing , (4) Members of the classes to attend regularly, to do the reading assigned, to maintain the standard of work set by the group, and to live up to the other obligations imposed upon them by the classes of which they are members , (5) Classes to be conducted upon the discussion method. A careful programme of study to be followed, each member having an opportunity to question the instructor and his fellow-members and to express his own opinion upon matters under discussion (The World Association for Adult Education, Bulletin XI, 1922, pp. 17-19 )

four classes were started—two in economics, one in practical English and one in mathematics. The last two did not meet with much success, as it soon became evident that the students required some elementary training before they could be expected to reach the standard set up for the classes. The economics' classes continued meeting until June 1921. That in Springfield had 16 on its class register, all men and trade unionists, and the attendance was well maintained. It met in the Central Labour Union Building. The class at Holyoke met in the High School. It had 35 members, with an average attendance of 25. Among them were trade union officials and members of the rank and file, one or two foremen, a few business and professional men, municipal employees, and about 8 women, chiefly school teachers and college graduates.

Steps were taken to ensure that the work would be undertaken throughout in a strictly non-propagandist manner. The report that discussions in classes frequently lasted long after the scheduled closing time, to the indignation of the janitors in charge of buildings, affords a striking parallel in this respect to the English University Tutorial classes. During the first year it was not thought advisable to require any written work of the students. No provision was made for granting diplomas or certificates.<sup>1</sup>

In 1921, following an increased legislative appropriation in California for University extension work, a group of representative labour men met with three members of the Department of Economics of the State University to consider the possibility of making labour education a part of the regular extramural curriculum.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The World Association for Adult Education, Bulletin XL, 1922, pp 17-19.

<sup>2</sup> Members of temporary committee, *Representing Labour*: Messrs. Scharrenberg, Mathewson, MacDonald, Miller, Mullen, Ellison; *Representing the University*: Professors Blum, Cross, Peixotto, Richardson. (1st Annual Report, University of California Extension Division.



This interest in education was not new to California labour. Many years before the State Federation had been instrumental in securing the first appropriation for extension teaching in the State. It was by the Secretary of the Federation, Mr. Paul Scharrenberg, that the A.F. of L. had been urged at one time to make use of university extension facilities for the education of working men. The conviction that labour in the State of California would support an affiliated educational movement was based upon the returns from a questionnaire sent out by the Federation to constituent unions. Following the meeting of the temporary joint committee, the sum of \$10,000 a year for two years was set aside for the organization within the Extension Division of a Department of Labour Education.

During the year 1921-22 six classes were organized in several California communities meeting either in school buildings or Labour Temples. Two in economic problems were attended by members of the American Federation of Teachers, who secured credit thereby toward higher degrees. Two on the history of trade unionism were offered to a machinists' local and to a central labour body in the interior of the state; two were vocational courses for carpenters in blue print reading.<sup>1</sup> Expansion the second year occurred in the vocational courses only of which sixteen were offered. The same classes for teachers were also held. In 1923 provision was made for the organization of a permanent joint committee of which the majority were trade union men. The funds hitherto disbursed under the authority of the Extension Division were allocated, under a two

Department of Labour Education, July 26, 1922, pp. 1, 2, unpublished. See also Proceedings, California State Federation of Labour, 1921, pp 71-72)

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, pp 14-15 In addition to the above a series of lectures was given the first year to San Francisco Labour Council on various subjects such as Unemployment, How the Air-plane Flies; Farm Labourers' Homes, Standards of Living, Game and Fur-bearing Animals, The Economy of Time and Mental Energy, Siberia, etc

year agreement, to the Department of Labour Education and the new venture in Workers' Education was allowed to affiliate with the national Workers' Education Bureau.

(3) A third group of educational enterprises for working men and women, known usually as Trade Union or Labour Colleges, has been initiated by organized labour, through local unions or central bodies. The characteristic feature of these experiments is their independence of external control. They are administered by the trade union or labour groups concerned. University co-operation is solicited only in an advisory capacity.

The best example of this form of organization is offered by the Boston Trade Union College established in 1921 by the Central Labour Union of that city. It was the belief of the founders that "progress for organized wage-earners can be assured only by social and industrial policies shaped by their own right thinking and that their ambitions for self-betterment must therefore include a concern for the higher training of the mind. . . . To men and women of the labour movement the college affords two distinctive advantages; (1) its control by organized labour enlists the self-respect of trade unionism, now aroused to develop its intellectual resources for playing a constructive part in society, (2) its discussion method makes a point of co-operative learning, the instructors contributing their specialized knowledge and technique, and the students their experience. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

The Boston Trade Union College is in close touch with teaching members of nearby Universities, but was founded on the initiative of the workers themselves. "The Central Labour Union formally adopted the plan which was prepared by a committee of its own body working in conjunction with the academic group.

<sup>1</sup> Announcement of Courses, Boston Trade Union College, 1921.

. . . The leading spirit outside the trade union ranks was H. W. L. Dana of Cambridge, a grandson of the poet Longfellow, formerly assistant professor of comparative literature at Columbia and identified with the Socialist movement in Boston. Dean Roscoe Pound of the Harvard Law School, Prof. W. Z. Ripley, Irving Fisher, Carlton Noyes, Felix Frankfurter, and R. F. A. Hoernle were some of those who lent their names to promoting the college and appeared on the first list of instructors."<sup>1</sup>

Control is vested in a committee of twenty members all of whom are appointed by the Boston Central Labour Union. Fifteen of the twenty-five represent organized labour in the city, five the teachers and five the students.<sup>2</sup> Representatives of the latter two groups are chosen from lists submitted to the Central labour body by the organized instructors and the organized students.<sup>3</sup> The chairman, Michael A. Murphy of the Stablemen's Union, was long president of the C.L.U.

<sup>1</sup> Pember, J. E., *Trade Unions Establish their Own College in Boston*. Boston Sunday Herald, Oct 24, 1920

<sup>2</sup> *Representing the Central Labour Union* Michael A Murphy, Stablemen's Union, Chairman, Sylvester J McBride, Typographical Union, Vice-Chairman; Mable Gillespie, Stenographers' Union, Secretary-Treasurer; George E. Curran, Theatrical Employees' Union; Dennis D Driscoll, Horseshoers' Union, Harley M Eller, Boilermakers' Union; Frank Fenton, Coal Teamsters' Union; Thomas H Gorraughty, Bartenders' Union, Michael Monahan, Milk-Wagon Drivers' Union, Mary V Murphy, Park and Recreation Employees' Union, Anna M Niland, Teachers' Union, John J O'Hara, Newspaper Web Pressmen's Union, Abraham Pearlstein, Newspaper Wagon Drivers' Union; Mary J. Rubin, Stenographers' Union, Nettie Silverbrook, Waist-Makers' Union.

*Representing the Students*: Winfield A Dwyer, Retail Clerks' Union, Esther Feldman; Mable Leslie, Telephone Operators' Union; Rudolph N Nagnot, Electrical Workers' Union, Gertrude Oppenheim, Teachers' Union

*Representing the Instructors*. Henry W. L. Dana, Instructor in Literature; Herbert Feis, Instructor in Economics; Daniel Foley, Instructor in Economics; Alfred D Sheffield, Instructor in Discussion; Sarah H Stites, Instructor in Economics

(Announcement of Courses, Boston Trade Union College, 1921)

<sup>3</sup> 1st N.C.W.E., New York, 1921, p. 17.

Though technically subject to the C.L.U. the committee has entire charge of the affairs of the college.

The courses offered by the Boston College are not unlike those given elsewhere in institutions of a similar origin. The students were especially interested in law as taught by Dean Pound, and representative government by Harold Laski. Great care was taken, however, to dispel the impression that here was to be another Rand School, for the Central Labour Union is an orthodox and conservative labour body. The lectures, demonstrations and arguments advanced by instructors have been "unmarked by a tinge of red."<sup>1</sup> The College started with 146 students. A year later it had 400. Registration in 1922, however, dropped to 200,<sup>2</sup> a phenomenon observers attribute to unemployment. Students cannot be induced to attend free of charge when out of work or on strike.<sup>3</sup>

The Washington Trade Union College, the Colleges of Passaic, Philadelphia, Denver, and other cities are similar in origin and management. Control in the first is in the hands of a board representing seven trade unions; two from the Federal Employees, three from the machinists, one each from the carpenter's, marine engineers', stationary engineers', upholsters', grade teachers', and high school teachers' union.<sup>4</sup>

The most significant trade union experiment in education was made in 1921 in Katona, New York. Here, in a small town about forty miles from the metropolitan area, Brookwood Workers' College was opened for resident students. The course at present is a two-year course, with arrangements for a third when it seems necessary. The first year is devoted to laying foundations and furnishing backgrounds. A course in social problems analyses the results of the industrial revolution in the United States, emphasizing unemployment, child labour, credit control, and the distribution

<sup>1</sup> Pember, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> 1st N.C.W.E., 1921, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> 2nd N.C.W.E., 1922, p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

of farm products. Corrective measures are proposed. A course is also given in the history of civilization, and the department of English offers some study of literature and a great deal of study of the technique of written and oral expression. The same courses are continued in the second year in an advanced form together with the history of the farmer and labour movement. Practical training is offered in office management, book-keeping, financial control, and civil government for those who are going out to work in the labour movement. A great deal of the work in the second year is directed toward special instruction along lines that the student expects to follow when she or he returns to active life. The College endeavours to equip working men and women for four functions—labour organization, statistics, workers' education, labour and farmer journalism.<sup>1</sup>

The College buildings are located on fifty acres of ground, the title of which is held by six people, interested in Workers' Education, who rent the property to the School for one dollar a year. The School itself is run by a voluntary association known as the Brookwood Co-operators, which consists of those who are living and working on the place, faculty, administrative persons, and students. This association appoints an Executive Committee consisting of two people elected by the students, two people elected by the faculty, and a fifth elected by the Brookwood Co-operators as a whole, who may be either a faculty or a student member. Each of the three persons in that position during this past year has been a student. The actions of the Executive Committee are checked by two others, one an advisory educational committee,<sup>2</sup> which offers

<sup>1</sup> Muste, A. J., *Brookwood Workers' College*, pp. 27-31. 2nd N C W E, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> The Advisory Educational Committee is composed of *Prof. Walton Hamilton*, Head of the Economics Department of Amherst College; *Prof. James H. Willits*, of the Wharton School of the University of

assistance along educational lines and vouches for the fact that an honest educational job is being done, the other, a Co-operating Labour Committee,<sup>1</sup> which maintains contact with the labour movement.

(4) Education for women workers has been carried on by two agencies, one the National Women's Trade Union League in Chicago, the other Bryn Mawr College near Philadelphia. The School for Organizers of the National Women's Trade Union League is supported out of the general funds of the organization with occasional scholarships contributed by sympathizers, and is conducted by the Educational Department of the League which endeavours to provide an opportunity for study to girls who wish to become organizers or active workers in the labour movement. Scholarships are open to trade union women who have had some actual experience in the management of their own unions or who have helped to organize the workers in their own trades. The women who attend the training schools are generally recruited from two groups; those who have shown ability as organizers and are sent by their own organization and those who have written to the school on their own initiative asking for scholarships.

The regular term of training is twelve months. A four-months' course is arranged for experienced

Pennsylvania, Head of the Department of Business Administration, and *Prof Wm. F. Ogburn* of the Department of Sociology at Columbia. (N.Y. Times, Oct. 9, 1921.)

<sup>1</sup> Composed of *John Fitzpatrick*, President of the Chicago Federation of Labour; *John Brophy*, President of District 2, United Mine Workers; *Rose Schneiderman* of the Women's Trade Union League; *Abraham Lefkowitz* of the Teachers' Union; *Charles Kutz*, Chairman of the International Machinists' Union, Pennsylvania Railroad Branch; and *James Maurer*, President of the Pennsylvania Federation of Labour. The faculty is headed at present by *A. J. Muste*, a graduate of Hope College, Michigan, and an ordained clergyman. After attending the New Brunswick Theological Seminary and the Union Seminary in New York he preached for ten years and became interested in labour at the time of the Lawrence strike when he was in Boston. He served for a time as General Secretary of the Amalgamated Textile Workers (N.Y. Times, Oct. 9, 1921)

organizers who are interested in academic instruction but are not in need of field work or organizing practice. The academic work includes the following courses:—Industrial History, Judicial Decisions Affecting Labour, Trade Agreements in Theory and Practice, History of Women in Industry and the Organization Movement among Women, Current Events, Social Economics, and Office Practice, and Parliamentary Law. Most of the classes in Labour History and Public Speaking are conducted in co-operation with the University of Chicago. Special courses are arranged so that the students may hear the leading trade union men and women of the country. Field Work includes experience in organization work of all kinds. Arrangements are made to give students opportunities to handle every type of work and every emergency. The field work is done under the advice and direction of competent leaders.<sup>1</sup> Thirty students have been enrolled in the School in nine years. It now has accommodation for five residents.<sup>2</sup>

In the autumn of 1920, President Thomas of Bryn Mawr proposed the plan of using the buildings of the College during the summer months for the extension of educational opportunities to women workers in industry. After the plan had been approved, a joint administrative committee was organized, composed of representatives of the directors, the faculty, the alumnae, and women workers. The latter were appointed by the committee in co-operation with Mary Anderson, Director of the Woman's Bureau of the Federal Department of Labour. The work of raising funds and selecting students was delegated to seven alumnae districts in the United States, to women workers and to other interested people. The Summer School for Women Workers in Industry finally opened in the summer of 1921.

<sup>1</sup> Gleason, *op. cit.*, Revised Edition, pp 18-19.

<sup>2</sup> Correspondence.

Control was not vested in Bryn Mawr College. It rested with a joint administrative committee composed of 36 people. Fifteen were representatives of different parts of the college, the faculty, the board of directors, and the alumnae association; fifteen were women from the ranks of industry or women who had been in industry; of the working women representatives eight were elected from women in industry at large, and seven from the alumnae of the Summer School itself, the remaining six were chosen by the original thirty. The directors, the assistant director, the executive secretary, and two representatives were elected by the faculty and chairman of the finance committee.<sup>1</sup>

For purposes of convenience in choosing students it was decided that the term, "women workers in industry" should be held to mean "women working with the tools of their trade, and not in a supervisory capacity."<sup>2</sup> For the first session this definition did not include saleswomen, waitresses, teachers or clerical workers. The entrance requirements were simple, including merely a common school education or its equivalent and ability to read and write English. Students were recommended by district alumnae committees and chosen by the Scholarship Committee at Bryn Mawr. There were 82 students in all, of twelve nationalities and 17 different religious beliefs. They came from 19 states, and represented 19 different trades. Some of them began work as young as 9 years of age. Forty-seven were members of The American Federation of Labour, Amalgamated and independent unions; the rest were unorganized workers.<sup>3</sup> Many of the students belonged to the Women's Trade

<sup>1</sup> Deardorff, Neva, *Bryn Mawr Summer School*, pp 78-79. 2nd N.C.W.E., 1922

<sup>2</sup> Leaflet, *The Summer School for Women Workers in Industry at Bryn Mawr College*, p 4 June 15, August 10, 1921.

<sup>3</sup> In 1922, 98 enrolled, from 40 trades, of whom 24 were garment workers, 6 electrical workers and 5 tobacco workers (School and Society, XV, No. 391, pp 692-693)



Union League, League of Women Voters, Consumers' League, National League of Girls' Clubs and the Y.W.C.A.<sup>1</sup>

(5) The educational work undertaken by garment workers resembles that of the Women's Trade League in that each is concerned in large measure with the mental improvement of women.<sup>2</sup> The two organizations differ, however, on practically every other point. For the membership of the needle trades is drawn from among the Russian Jews who brought from the old country a reverence for learning for its own sake, and a keen sense of its indispensability to success in life. These organizations, furthermore, look beyond the American Federation of Labour educational objective of literacy and the W.T.U.L. aim of increasing the bargaining power of women organizers and officials. They are permeated with the socialist labour philosophy, and Workers' Education of the Jewish Clothing Workers is directed therefore toward the reconstruction of the social order.

Originally, all organized clothing workers were united in one organization, the United Garment Workers, and were thus affiliated with the American Federation of Labour. Early in the history of the organization, however, a struggle began between socialist members of the rank and file and conservative officials. Dissatisfaction with the autocratic methods of the latter, and their apparent indifference to the desires of the membership, caused many to become restless. Matters finally came to a head in the convention of 1914, when 110 delegates representing 54 locals withdrew and formed

<sup>1</sup> Funk, Bertha, *My Eight Weeks at Bryn Mawr*, pp 247-250. Life and Labour, Oct 1921. See also for critical discussion, Craton, A W, *Amalgamated Girls at Bryn Mawr*, p 5 Advance, August 19, 1921

<sup>2</sup> Proportion of sexes in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union *Women*, 67,706, or 51 per cent, *Men*, 65,050, or 49 per cent. Women predominate in the Dress and Waist, Corset, White Goods, and Children's Wear organizations. (Justice, Nov. 19, 1920, p. 3)

an organization of their own, later to become known as the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.<sup>1</sup>

Educational work was begun the year of disagreement by both the American Federation of Labour and secessionist groups. Among the radical garment unions which remained loyal to the American Federation of Labour the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (I.L.G.W.U.), the United Cloth Hat and Cap Maker's Union, the Dress and Waist Workers and the International Fur Workers' Union were the most important.<sup>2</sup>

The question of education was broached in the Hat and Cap Makers' organization as early as 1906 and 1907.<sup>3</sup> At that time enthusiastic and idealistic workers in the movement were plentiful but leaders realized that elementary training and intelligence was needed to make their activity effective.<sup>4</sup> In 1914, an educational beginning was made by the Ladies' Garment Workers with an appropriation of \$1,500. In 1915 Local No. 5 of the Cap Makers in Chicago followed by organizing monthly lectures and discussions,<sup>5</sup> and Local No. 25 of the Waist and Dressmakers in New York City opened a Unity Centre in a public school.<sup>6</sup>

At the Philadelphia Convention of the Ladies' Garment Workers in 1916, the question of labour education was more seriously considered. It was decided to appoint a committee of five and appropriate

<sup>1</sup> Savage, *op cit.*, pp 205-249

<sup>2</sup> The I L G W U, composed of the children's dressmakers, house-dress and kimono workers, the private dressmaker, the petticoat workers, New York Goods Workers, Bonnoz embroiderers, Swiss embroidery workers, ladies' tailors, waterproof garment makers, corset makers, and others, has a membership of 132,756. (Justice, Nov. 19, 1920, p 3) United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers number 6310 (Headgear Workers, Aug 5, 1921) The fur workers about 12,100. (Savage, *op cit.*, p 232)

<sup>3</sup> Proceedings, 12th Biennial Convention, United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers' Union, New York, 1919, p 143

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p 142

<sup>5</sup> Proceedings, 11th Biennial Convention, Cloth Hat and Cap Makers, New York, 1917, p 58.

<sup>6</sup> Gleason, *op. cit.*, 1st Edition, p. 16

\$5,000 for educational activities. The Committee accepted the plan of the Waist Makers and opened a few more Unity Centres, thus laying a foundation for the Workers' University, which was opened in the Washington Irving High School in New York. To the Boston Convention in 1918, the Educational Committee presented a report of accomplishment, which was heartily endorsed by the delegates assembled. The Central Executive Board was thereupon instructed to spend \$10,000 yearly to carry on the work.

At the present time the I.L.G.W.U. conducts 8 Unity Centres in Public School buildings in the different neighbourhoods of New York City where members reside. In each Unity Centre there are classes in English,—elementary, intermediate, advanced,—taught by teachers assigned by the Evening School Department of the Board of Education. There is also in each Centre an Educational Supervisor, assigned by the Department of Community and Recreation Centres of the Board of Education, who teaches physical training. The International makes independent arrangements for lectures and lessons on the labour movement, trade unionism and economics. The rest of the curriculum deals with health, or subjects of more cultural interest, such as literature, music, and art. Every instructor prepares an outline of the lessons which contains a statement of facts on the subject he is going to talk about and the session ends with general discussion and questions. Copies of the outlines are placed in the hands of the students during the lectures. Afterwards they are sent to local unions outside of New York, with the advice that similar lectures be arranged.

The Workers's University consists of a number of classes conducted in the Washington Irving High School on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings. These classes attract members of the International who have already had some instruction in the social sciences. The courses are of a more advanced char-

acter and the teachers are generally specialists in their field.

The field of instruction covers courses in Trade Union Policy, Current Economic Literature, Current Economic Opinion, Current Labour and Economic Problems, The Co-operative Movement, Economic Geography, Applied Psychology and Logic, Sociology, History of Civilization, Modern Literature, and Public Speaking. Discussions by specialists are arranged for the classes on Current Labour Problems, such as on the Steel Industry and the Steel Strike, the Coal Mining Situation, the British Labour Situation to-day, the Shop Steward Movement, the Plumb Plan, etc. In the classes in Trade Unionism special reference is made to the problems of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.

An Extension Division provides education for large numbers of the membership. It not only organizes special classes to which all members are invited, but also concerts and other entertainments. Lectures on health are given by physicians, with particular attention to problems of home and shop hygiene. During strikes, lectures are given to groups of organized and unorganized workers. In connection with all courses, books are recommended for reading and study and are obtained for the workers by the Educational Department at reduced prices. The International does not attempt directly to satisfy the desire for music and drama on the part of its members. But it realizes that such a desire is very important and must be gratified, if the life of workers is to be full and rich. Arrangements are, therefore, made with the musical and dramatic organizations for reduced price tickets for members.

One interesting result of educational activity was a movement among the members to beautify their homes. This movement culminated in the establishment of Summer Unity Homes, the first of which was the achievement of the 30,000 members of the Waist and

Dressmakers' Union of New York, and was purchased by the union at the cost of about \$100,000. It is located in Pennsylvania and was known formerly as the Forest Park House, a summer resort for wealthy people. Unity Village contains a main building, and twelve adjoining cottages, surrounded by gardens and forest, equipped with all conveniences. In one summer 500 of the workers came out weekly. The Philadelphia Waistmakers, an organization of 5,000 young women, purchased a Unity House and spent about \$50,000 upon it. In addition, the Philadelphia Waist and Dressmakers' Union operates a lunchroom, located in a building in the heart of the business section of the city, where members are served wholesome food at the lowest possible price. Like many other local garment unions, it has a good library, containing almost 3,000 books.<sup>1</sup>

While these educational developments were in progress under the direction of the Ladies' Garment Workers, the United Cloth Hat and Cap Workers were also actively engaged in making independent educational experiments for their members. In 1917 a plan was approved<sup>2</sup> for organizing the Headgear Workers' Institute. The programme of the Institute provided for family gatherings where music, educational moving pictures, and talks were given by representatives of the labour movement. Operatives, their wives, and children were united in class work. English and the history of the labour movement were given special emphasis, and recreational activities, such as swimming, physical training, and dancing were organized.

During the progress of this experiment leaders came to the conclusion that to be successful educational work should be organized on a large scale. With this end

<sup>1</sup> Gleason *op. cit.*, Revised Edition, pp 19-27

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings, 12th Biennial Convention, U.C.H. and C.U., 1919, p. 174.

in view a conference composed of ten unions<sup>1</sup> was held in 1918, which decided to organize in a permanent form as the United Labour Educational Committee.<sup>2</sup>

The U.L.E.C. existed twenty-nine months. During that period it conducted 97 Forums with a total attendance of 15,000; 232 lectures and 6 concerts at the meetings of 55 locals. The total attendance was 31,000. Furthermore, classes were arranged in co-operation with the Rand School, lectures were given for students, dramatic recitals provided, recreational work started, a Workman's Theatre opened and a health service begun. When, as the result of financial difficulties, the Committee finally dissolved, many unions which had never before heard of Workers' Education were deeply impressed with its necessity.<sup>3</sup>

The needle trades group, represented by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, which seceded

<sup>1</sup> These included the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America; International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers of North America; International Jewellery Workers' Union; Joint Board Furriers' Union, Fancy Leather Goods Workers' Union; Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paper Hangers; Bakery Workers' Union, Workmen's Circle. (*Ibid.*, p 177.)

<sup>2</sup> In 1921 the organizations affiliated with the U.L.E.C. were as follows: Amalgamated Sheet Metal Workers, No 137; Associated Teachers' Union, Bakers' and Confectionery Workers' Union (3 locals), Beltmakers' Union, Central Federated Union of the City of New York; Cleaners' and Dryers' Union, Fancy Leather Goods Workers' Union, Jersey City; Hebrew Actors' Union, Hebrew Butchers' Union; Hebrew Teachers' Union; International Fur Workers' Union, Jewellery Case Makers' Union; Jewellery Workers' Union, No 1, Knit Goods Workers' Union, Library Employees' Union, Mineral Water Workers' Union, Iron and Bronze Workers' Union, No 275; Painters, Decorators and Paper Hangers, No 261; Retail Grocery and Dairy Clerks' Union; Suitcase and Bag Makers' Union, Teachers' Union; United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers of N.A. (14 locals); United Hebrew Trades, United Neckwear Makers; Waiters' Union, No. 1, Women's Trade Union League; Workmen's Circle; Ladies' Waist and Dressmakers' Union, L 25; I.L.G.W.U. Co-operating Member, Amalgamated Ladies' Garment Cutters, Local, No. 10, I.L.G.W.U Co-operating Member. (Gleason, *op cit*, Revised Edition, pp. 17-18)

<sup>3</sup> 2nd N.C.W.E., 1922, pp. 121, 128.

from the American Federation of Labour in 1914, has also taken a leading part in Workers' Education in the United States. The value of learning was emphasized at the inception of the organization and since then no opportunity has been lost to further educational endeavour. Before it was one year old, elaborate plans for both extensive and intensive educational effort were formulated. Reporting to the Second Biennial Convention, in the spring of 1916, the members of the General Executive Board stated the position of the union in unmistakable terms. "It is not enough," they said, "to merely organize the workers. Organization in itself is no end and has no meaning. . . . If we content ourselves with that and make no effort at higher elevation, we simply confirm the worker in the status of a biped beast of burden. . . . Material improvements are in the very nature of things of primary importance. But when the body of the worker is more rested and better fed, his intellect should likewise be taken care of. . . ." A report submitted to the Third Biennial Convention conveyed the same thought. "It is our intention to make educational work a permanent feature of our organization." Another resolution declared that: "it is important that a spiritual atmosphere should be created among our members for the purpose of bringing out the best that is in them." The General Office was instructed "to endeavour to the best of their ability to establish libraries and reading rooms in all clothing centres where conditions will permit so as to enable our members to enjoy their spare time in a wholesome atmosphere among their fellow workers." The Boston Convention finally decided to establish a National Educational Department to be located at the General Office, with an Educational Director in charge.<sup>1</sup>

Under the general supervision of the National Edu-

<sup>1</sup> Gleason, *op cit.*, Revised Edition, pp. 46-47 See also Salutsky, J. B, *Amalgamated Accomplishments in Education*, p. 6 Advance, June 17, 1921.

cational Department, Amalgamated Active Workers' Schools have been established in six cities.<sup>1</sup> In Rochester the work was begun in 1919-1920. Classes were taught by the Educational Director, a former union organizer, by a professor in the University of Rochester, and others. The course in Labour Unionism, given by the educational director was a course in the practical aspects of the union movement with particular reference to the clothing industry in Rochester. A weekly paper of four pages was published as part of the educational programme, and distributed free to the clothing shops. It was devoted chiefly to union notices and discussion of educational subjects. The union also had a small library, a branch of the public library, containing books on labour. All classes in the Labour College were open to union members free of charge.

The educational work in Rochester was given impetus by a large weekly forum which averaged over 1,000 in attendance. The forum was held in the union's headquarters and speakers of national reputation were often brought to the city. The women, who constitute a majority of the clothing workers of Rochester, were not neglected. They had classes of their own and many social activities. Some of the topics of lectures and discussions before a special women's group were: "Should a Woman Obey Her Husband?"; "Should a Woman Earn Her Own Living?"; "Physical Fitness"; "Women and Clothes." Popular lectures on economic and social themes were given before union locals under such titles as: "How to be a Millionaire"; "How to Die in the Poor House"; "Why Women Should be Discontented"; "If I Were Harding", etc.

In April 1920, the Baltimore Labour College which sought to obtain the co-operation of both the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labour started four classes,

<sup>1</sup> Amalgamated Illustrated Almanac, 1923



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using one of the down town buildings of John Hopkins University for night courses.<sup>1</sup> Other Schools for Active Workers have since been started in Newport, Boston, Milwaukee, and Toronto.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gleason, *op. cit.*, Revised Edition, pp 37-40.

<sup>2</sup> Amalgamated Illustrated Almanac, 1923, p. 98.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE NATURE OF AMERICAN EXPERIMENTS

“ One of the main objects of education is to prevent people from defeating their own civilization by refusing to tolerate novelties and heresies which history proves they had better tolerate ”

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW.

#### I

THE movement for Workers' Education in the United States differs in many respects from that in England. It lacks the compulsions of old and strongly-felt class-cleavages. It stands in want of the potent religious and spiritual traditions of the W.E.A. The teaching task in America is more complex by reason of the presence of the foreign-born. These, however, are the less important differences between the two movements. The salient feature of Workers' Education in the newer country is its immaturity and experimental nature. The one hundred and fifty odd educational enterprises for American adult working men and women are still, as a result, without a common goal. Teaching methods are everywhere on trial and the administrative machinery for national co-ordination of widely scattered activities is not perfected and in some quarters not desired.

Two schools of thought concerning the ultimate purpose of Workers' Education compete for followers in the United States. One is composed of members of frankly radical organizations. The philosophy of secessionists' unions and socialist bodies dominates instruction. Its educational platform is clearly formulated, and its desire to replace capitalism with a more equitable economic order is eagerly made public.

Until recently, the educational activities organized by

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left wing groups, such as the I.W.W. were ephemeral in character. Treasuries were the momentary accumulation of strike funds; headquarters, the work of energetic local secretaries. These offices during industrial strife became the centres of propaganda. Between strikes they served as rest houses for migratory labourers to discuss social and economic matters, earning the title thereby of "spittoon philosophers."<sup>1</sup> The three stars in the I.W.W. literature stand for "Education, Organization, Emancipation," but formal instruction under such circumstances was confined to lectures before small groups of actual or potential converts, or to newspaper articles on the current interpretation of Marxian theory.<sup>2</sup> Systematic study involving sustained mental effort as well as emotional receptivity on the part of students was unknown.

Within the last year or two, however, an interesting development has taken place. Instead of emphasizing the revolutionary side of the movement, the I.W.W. has prepared to teach the workers how to run as well as how to seize industry. In 1920, \$2,000 was appropriated to establish a Bureau of Industrial Research. Engineers were engaged to make surveys of industries. A year later a resolution called for a ceaseless campaign of education among the workers in order to accomplish the transition from capitalism to the new society with as little social friction as possible,<sup>3</sup> and the Work People's College of Duluth was taken over as part of the new educational programme.

Socialists of the right wing share with the I.W.W.

<sup>1</sup> Pamphlet, *What is the I W W. A Candid Statement of its Principles, Objects, and Methods* (Chicago, I W W) See also Browne, W E., *What's What in the Labour Movement*, p 455. (N Y, Heubasch, 1921)

<sup>2</sup> *Industrial Solidarity* (Chicago) publishes an occasional two-column discussion headed "Economics for the Worker, Plain Talks on Wealth, Its Production and Distribution," also an "Historical Catechism of American Unionism," embodying a series of questions and answers on the history of trade unionism in the United States

<sup>3</sup> Savage, *op cit.*, pp. 159-162.

belief in the value of technical training for administrative duties in the new society. But some of them prefer to emphasize the immediate tasks before the workers. "What the workers want," says the Rochester Labour College of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, "is labour dope, something about the conduct of the union, something practical that will help them in the time of a strike."<sup>1</sup> And the aim of the Rand School is to render the rank and file of the working class articulate and to train the civil service of the class struggle.

Most of the Garment Workers go a step further and distinguish between training for function in the labour movement and education for personal enjoyment. "It does not require very much knowledge," says one spokesman of the I.L.G.W.U., "to see that things will not continue as they are. It is merely a matter of time when Labour will be forced . . . to compel widespread and fundamental changes in the present economic system. Who is going to accomplish this? Surely not millions of ignorant and dissatisfied men and women. . . . The actual constructive work will be performed by those in the labour movement who know and understand. Who are they? No one can answer correctly. It is our sacred duty to find these men and women, and give them the knowledge and vision which will enable them to serve their fellow workers efficiently."<sup>2</sup>

"We must now talk not of the misery of the workers but of the greater ambitions of the workers," says another. . . . "The Labour Movement used to be confined to the demand for wages and hours. It has now outgrown this. Responsibility has been forced on the workers. The master class is unable to manage the entire industrial life . . . the labour movement is assuming control of it little by little."<sup>3</sup> The needle trades

<sup>1</sup> Gleason, Arthur, *Workers' Education in the United States*, p 143. New Republic, March 28, 1923.

<sup>2</sup> Cohn, Fannia M., *The Educational Work of the I.L.G.W.U.*, 2nd N.C.W.E., 1922, pp 52-53.

<sup>3</sup> *Headgear Workers' Journal*, Feb 20, 1920, p 7.

firmly believe in arming themselves intellectually for the class struggle. Their devotion to knowledge is based on the doctrine that "peace is war, carried on by other means." But their goal is both economic and spiritual and they do not overlook the personal side of education. The right of every man to enjoy the best in art, letters and music is considered fully as important as his right to self-government in industry. These unions strive "to supply adequate mental food" for the intellectual and psychological life of members, "to develop and strengthen the inherent strivings of the people for higher ideals of humanity" and beauty.<sup>1</sup>

The second school of thought in American Workers' Education is composed of individuals and organizations associated with Trade Union Colleges, University experiments in adult instruction, and educational organizations for women workers. Although all of these enterprises have assumed the burden of educating the working class, they offer no common social philosophy, no explanation of the struggle between capital and labour, and no consistent or class apology for educational activity independent of the contemporary public school and university system. Most of them state their educational purpose with reluctance and in broad general terms. They appear to strike somewhat blindly in the general direction of more knowledge, confident that whatever its destination, it will somehow or other lead them aright.

According to the report submitted to the First and Second National Conference on Workers' Education only two Trade Union Colleges, for example, were impressed with the necessity of formulating even a vague purpose for their educational activity. The aim of the Boston experiment was announced as that of shaping the thinking of wage-earners<sup>2</sup> in order to assure their "progress".<sup>3</sup> The Trade Union College of Philadelphia

<sup>1</sup> A E C, p. 363.

<sup>2</sup> For the first two years only organized workers were welcomed as students (2nd N C W E, 1922, p. 49)

<sup>3</sup> Announcement of Courses, Boston Trade Union College, 1921.

hoped to arouse an interest in labour education and to develop the power to think among working people.<sup>1</sup> The founders of the Department of Labour Education of the University of California were also in a very ambiguous state of mind when they tried to indicate its place in the world of education and of labour. "It shall be the aim and the purpose of this department," states the first annual report,<sup>2</sup> "to provide an educational medium through which those persons engaged in manual labour may co-operate with the members of the teaching staff of the University of California and develop courses of instruction which treat *particularly* those problems *that chiefly concern labour*." Yet the term "labour" was not precisely defined. "It shall be understood to encompass groups of *vocational* workers of *any* trade or grade." Curiously enough although the department refused "to assume that Labour Education differs essentially from education or others", it was willing at the same time to recognize the fact that "labour may have *special interests* in various courses, determined by economic status, which can be organized to serve the *immediate* demands of labour *more specifically*."<sup>3</sup> This confusion has not been greatly mitigated by statements of the Director of the Extension Division which lead the reader to think, that to him at least, Workers' Education is only another name for immigrant education. In reporting to the President of the University in 1924, he remarks that "One of the most important questions before the Extension Division is that of how to meet the needs of immigrants adequately . . . The way to meet this problem, so far as it has been worked out elsewhere, seems to be found in the work of the W.E.A. in England."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2nd N.C.W.E., 1922, p. 36

<sup>2</sup> See also San Francisco Labour Clarion, Feb. 3, 1922, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Author's Italics

<sup>4</sup> Annual Report of the President of the University of California, University of California Bulletin, 3rd Series, Vol. XVII, No. 7, pp. 48-49 (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1924)

Of all groups interested in educating the workers in the United States none, however, has been more reluctant to explain why they are doing it than the women. The Summer School for Women Workers at Bryn Mawr was founded "to offer young women of character and ability a fuller education in order that they may widen their influence in the industrial world, help in the coming social reconstruction and increase the happiness and usefulness of their own lives."<sup>1</sup> The National Women's Trade Union League has from time to time actually adopted a nom de plume for its School. Prior to 1915 it was nearly always referred to as the School of Organizers. After that date this practice was continued<sup>2</sup> officially and in the labour press with an occasional reference here and there to the School for Women Labour Leaders. In correspondence with donors, however, it became the School for Active Workers in the Labour Movement<sup>3</sup> and, in financial correspondence during the War, the League was not averse to emphasizing its peculiar ability for training "sane" leadership,<sup>4</sup> whatever that may have been at the time in question.

Spokesmen neither for the Workers' Education Bureau nor for the A.F. of L. have so far been successful in clarifying the issue. Labouring probably under the necessity of reconciling many adverse elements, the former have shown a certain inability or unreadiness to state the economic and political purposes inherent in their efforts. They tend to deal in truisms such as the definition of general education, as a "quality coming out of life," or "a measure of progress"; of Workers' Education, as an expression of "the cultural and humanistic purposes of the labour movement." They say that in seeking knowledge "labour seeks not a living but a

<sup>1</sup> Life and Labour, July 1921, p. 189

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 1921, pp. 241, 259 See also Gleason, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Proceedings, N.W.T.U.L., 1915, p. 59

<sup>4</sup> From letters soliciting subscriptions.

life.”<sup>1</sup> All of which is true. But with no other explanation of the purpose of Workers’ Education, the casual and unsympathetic observer thinking of the ramifications of the public school system is forced to ask, “Why have it, then?”

The American Federation of Labour, like other right wing enterprises, has also allowed its educational position to remain uncharted. Federation support for the Women’s Trade Union League plan for a School for Organizers was won on the currently popular argument of the need for social interpretation. The President of the League, an organization dependent in part at least upon the gifts of benevolently inclined leisure-class women, told the A.F. of L. Convention of 1908 that the League, in its educational work was “trying to *interpret* the trade union movement to the women of America to the unorganized women, to the women of privilege, to all the women.”<sup>2</sup> Her argument was sustained by Mr. Raymond Robins who defined the process of interpretation as that “of making the real human value manifest to many men and women not directly interested personally in this struggle.”<sup>3</sup> The Ladies’ Garment Workers were in a stronger strategic position with respect to the Federation than the Women’s Trade Union League. Consequently, although they were socialistic in inclination it was not necessary for them to gloss over their real educational intentions, and the Federation was forced to give recognition to their educational work.<sup>4</sup>

Since that time the American Federation of Labour has maintained a delicate balance between veiled hostility and cordial acceptance of the new movement. It has had its reputation as the pioneer of working-

<sup>1</sup> Workers’ Education Year Book, 1924, pp. 19, 24, 25

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings, A F. of L., 1908, p 126.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 1908, p 133

<sup>4</sup> See speech of Molly Friedman, Proceedings, A F. of L., 1918, pp. 321, 322.



class educational progress to sustain. Accordingly, it has not been able to ignore any educational venture strong enough to stand alone. On the other hand, the cordial endorsement of educational experiments independent of the public school system has been seen to involve a friendly alliance with the radical enemy. Classes have often been taught by socialist or professional intellectuals. The Federation has frequently been compelled, therefore, to fall back on negative sympathy, solemn warnings, and a certain amount of open suspicion.

The second National Conference on Workers' Education was attended by the President and one of the Vice-presidents of the Federation. Each spoke at some length upon the question at issue. Mr. Gompers reiterated the orthodox conception of the part played by the working class in the establishment of the public school. He sketched the history of the educational activity of the Federation. He announced the official endorsement of the movement. He ended, however, on a note of admonition, which carried in it all the overtones of American Federation of Labour educational orthodoxy. "There is a great future before you and your organization, providing you . . . teach the right things. . . . To teach men and women of labour to belong to their trade or labour unions, to stand by themselves, to help to improve the physical, spiritual, and mental standards and to direct the sentiment and aspirations, is the tremendous task before your organization. . . . But, a little learning is most dangerous . . . Teaching . . . of a thought that is hurtful or misdirected in its influence upon the natural and rational labour movement of your country is most hurtful and injurious in its results. . . . I make no reflection upon anyone but I doubt the wisdom of having a non-union person try to teach trade unionism to trade union working men and women. . . . I doubt the wisdom of having in the directorship (of the Workers' Education

Bureau) . . . a person who does not represent and have some connection with the organized effort of education and labour.”<sup>1</sup>

The message of Vice-President Mathew Woll was also admonitory. Admitting that the working masses were denied access to higher education by the necessity for going to work early in life, he still maintained that the American trade union as such, was a more effective educational agency than the greatest college ever established. “All human problems,” he said, “receive consideration at Trade Union meetings, and it is through those discussions . . . that the greatest educational work among the workers is going on at present” In 1923, President Gompers was still hoping for the time when special educational efforts for Workers might not be necessary.<sup>2</sup>

Only one trade unionist of national prominence in A.F. of L. circles has seemed to realize the importance of a definite social goal as a basis for Workers’ Education. James H. Maurer, President of the Pennsylvania State Federation of Labour, emphasized the necessity of working men training themselves for the future ownership and management of industry. “My socialist, communist, and revolutionary friends who speak in glowing terms about the workers running everything, you can’t talk too much of that for me,” he said. “I want to run things, too, but . . . if we don’t know something about it, we are liable to make a worse mess of it than the failures that are trying to run them now . . . This is not a question with us of a toy or plaything. It is a question of actual life or death. . . . In my mind, it would be most unfortunate if the workers were to suddenly find themselves in possession of industry and the government. . . . Understanding the limitations of the workers as I do, I feel satisfied that unless a certain number of us . . .

<sup>1</sup> 2nd N C W E, 1922, pp 89-93

<sup>2</sup> Workers’ Education Year Book, 1924, p 91.

are properly prepared, we . . . will make just as big . . . a mess out of things as the present managers are guilty of doing."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Maurer is one of the few connecting links between trade unionists who regard Workers' Education as a preliminary to workers' control of industry and those who seek merely to improve their power as bargainers in the labour market.

## II

Educational and administrative procedure in American Workers' Education is also in an experimental stage. Teaching methods and the strength or weakness of national co-ordination hinge upon the conception held by dominant bodies of the ultimate purpose of the movement.

With almost no exception Trade Union Colleges, and classes organized under University or A.F. of L. influence, adhere to the small class system for individual instruction. Their aim when not cultural merely is the training of officials and leaders. The spokesmen of the I.L.G.W.U. and the A.C.W. of A. and other smaller garment groups are convinced on the contrary, that the training of the individual trade unionist is only one-half of the task. Educated leaders with ignorant followers, they regard as helpless. They lay great stress on the necessity of educating the rank and file and spend as much energy in devising methods of mass education as in organizing small classes for exhaustive study. "It is the intelligent citizenship in the unions that will bring an intelligent leadership. Hence, it must be understood that a workers' college must organize activities for every group."<sup>2</sup>

With this principle in mind the Headgear Workers began their educational experiments with family gather-

<sup>1</sup> 2nd N.C.W.E., 1921, pp. 104-109 1st N.C.W.E., 1922, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> Cohn, Fannia M., *The Educational Work of the I.L.G.W.U.*, 1st N.C.W.E., 1921, pp. 39, 40

ings where movies and talks on the problems of trade unionism were given. Other unions developed similar methods of mass education. "If you are going to get . . . workers to . . . think . . . you have got to adopt . . . methods that will jar them loose from their ordinary inertia."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly all of the Jewish unions emphasize physical education and recreation. Many have established centres similar to social settlements where the workers meet for health education, gymnastics, games, music, and dancing. During strikes entertainments are arranged for unemployed men and women, and lecturers are engaged to address large and small groups on various aspects of the labour movement. Both the Ladies' Garment Workers and the Amalgamated have developed an elaborate system for attracting large audiences. In Chicago the latter spent \$1,000 a night on concerts where the people heard first a great artist and then a good lecture on a labour subject.<sup>2</sup> In Rochester the same union enforces compulsory education. Applicants for membership are compelled to attend two classes on the principles of unionism before being admitted.<sup>3</sup> Funds are raised largely from contributions made by central bodies, local unions, and student fees. Some enterprises charge a nominal student fee which ranges from \$2.00 to \$5.00 per course. Others make no direct charge, and students are supported on scholarships.<sup>4</sup>

The generally accepted device for holding the interest of students and maintaining a democratic form of local administration is that of student representation on governing committees. All the stronger enterprises are firmly convinced of the wisdom of the method. Broad planning for the educational work of the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p 159

<sup>2</sup> 2nd N.C.W.E., 1922, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> 2nd N.C.W.E., p 21.

<sup>4</sup> 1st N.C.W.E., pp. 133-141 These figures and facts are taken from the report on a questionnaire issued in 1921, when 23 experiments in Workers' Education were known to exist

I.L.G.W.U., for instance, is entrusted to the Educational Committee. This Committee while leaving to itself the planning of the educational activities, has created in the office of the International an Education Department, which is in charge of the entire educational work. This Department is managed by a Director, who is an educator, and by the Executive Secretary of the Educational Committee. To guard against an over-centralization of educational control, a Permanent Joint Conference of the educational committee of local unions has been established. This conference meets from time to time with the Educational Committee. It renders valuable service in maintaining contact with locals and in passing on suggestions from the rank and file. In each Unity Centre, the students elect two members from every class to serve on a Students' Council. In the Workers' University, the students elect three members from each class. The members of students' councils not only aid the authorities in maintaining contact with classes but also three of their number to sit with the Executive Committee of the Faculty. This group considers the problems of each Unity Centre and of the Workers' University and passes upon the curriculum. The administration of education in the A.C.W. of A. is even more centralized.

A few enterprises make no provision for student control of student or educational affairs. These, however, are exceptional, and almost invariably represent weaker links in the chain of Workers' Education.

Recognizing the need for unity of effort, the elimination of duplication, a determined effort has been made to extend the principle of representation to form a national co-ordinating agency, strong enough to command the co-operation of the Universities, flexible enough to include within its fold all shades of working-class opinion. To this end, on New Year's Eve, 1921, in New York City, the Workers' Education Bureau was founded, and in April of the following

year the first National Conference on Workers' Education was called.

The W.E.B. was organized to act as a clearing house for information ; an organization for publicity ; a registry of teachers ; a laboratory on text books, syllabi of courses, methods of pedagogy and other class-room material ; and an agency for the collection and interpretation of statistics. It proposed also to co-ordinate and assist in every possible manner the educational work now carried on by the organized workers, and to stimulate the creation of additional enterprises in labour education throughout the United States. Active membership at first included international and national labour unions ; State Federations of labour and other state labour organizations ; City Central Labour Unions and District Organizations or Councils ; local labour unions ; bona fide co-operative associations and labour educational enterprises. Associate membership was made up of members of local unions, teachers, organizers, and other interested persons.<sup>1</sup>

For a time University groups, organizations out for socialist propaganda, and bodies which drew a sharp distinction between propaganda and education, acted together in the Bureau and seemed to suffer no inconvenience in doing so. After a time, however, disputes arose which threatened to limit the usefulness of the Bureau until a satisfactory solution was found.

The first cause of dissension among organizations affiliated with the Bureau arose concerning the relationship of the W.E.B. to the Universities. Many of the latter offer extension instruction. The enrolment in extramural classes is large. But courses are developed to meet leisure class demands for culture ; to supple-

<sup>1</sup> Financial support was derived during the first year from affiliation fees, membership dues, loans and donations from private individuals. The total budget amounted to a little more than \$6000, most of the money being spent upon publications (Miller, *S. American Federationist*, December 1922, pp 685-686 )

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ment the normal school training of teachers; or to train artisans for vocational advancement. University authorities on the whole seem to be entirely unaware of the significance of the intellectual ferment among organized workers, and Extension Departments with one or two notable exceptions have no idea to what extent they minister or fail to minister to its development.<sup>1</sup>

When Extension authorities are cognizant of the presence of the new educational movement in the community they are usually unwilling to admit that different economic classes have different educational interests. The director of the University Extension of the Columbia University, for example, believes that the universities "can and should supply adult educa-

<sup>1</sup> An attempt was made by the author to determine the number of working men attending Extension Classes in the United States. Requests for information were sent in February, 1922, to 125 Extension Departments. Of 68 replies received 29, or about one-half, reported that occupational data had never been collected, 25 offered instruction only to teachers; 14 recognized the presence of workers among their students.

Re-analysis of the figures submitted by the 14 institutions, sufficiently interested in their artisan enrolment to collect occupational statistics, provided additional enlightenment. One set was sent by Union College in Schenectady, a city composed almost exclusively of employees of two large industrial plants. It was inevitable that the majority of the extension students in that institution would follow manual occupations. Several other colleges reported that their enrolment of working men was less than 12 per cent., all of whom were registered in vocational courses. Only two, judging by the character of courses offered or the care with which occupational data were compiled, appeared to have the education of the working class, as a class, in mind. One of these was the University of Colorado with an enrollment of 502 coal-miners, 277 railroad shop-workers, and 173 employees of sugar factories. The other was the Department of Extension of the Massachusetts Board of Education. In this state, although the courses offered were primarily vocational, 32.5 per cent of the students were drawn from manufacturing and mechanical industries and occupational statistics were kept elaborately. (Commonwealth of Massachusetts Bulletin of the Board of Education Department of University Extension, 3rd Annual Report, March, 1918) The University of California at this time had already established a Department of Labour Education, but made no report of the fact.

tion for organized labour exactly as for other organizations," . . . but . . . "these institutions, in their service for the public, must have no regard for class distinction. . . . Nevertheless, it is no less fundamental that they should adapt their methods to the needs of the student. Hence, they are prepared to follow any plan that is acceptable to labour unions provided such a plan is consistent with the established . . . theories of education. . . . University Extension co-operates with the American Institute of Banking . . . I would propose that, . . . representatives of trade union colleges . . . meet in conference with representatives of . . . nearby universities to consider this co-operation."<sup>1</sup>

In response to these conditions a few leaders in Workers' Education regard the question of University participation in the movement with a certain amount of indifference. The majority, however, feel with the socialist press that "nowhere in the world is there a more servile and conscienceless class of educators than in the United States, and the present drive . . . upon the purses of exploiters, the frank commitment against 'radical' ideas that may arise are evidence of the prostitution of learning and the supremacy of capital in education."<sup>2</sup> A similar attitude is expressed by James H. Maurer of the Pennsylvania State Federation of Labour, a member of the American Federation of Labour, and a man of unusual experience and balanced judgment. He feels that the best the workers hope for from public education in the lower schools is a second-rate commercial training.<sup>3</sup> The word "college" reminds him, as an active unionist, "of the persecution of professors for showing too much interest in the

<sup>1</sup> Prof James C. Egbert in the N Y Times, May 22, 1922

<sup>2</sup> Call (New York), Nov. 22, 1922, p 10 See also Sinclair, Upton, "The Goose Step" (Pasadena, Calif, Upton Sinclair, 1923) Nearing, Scott, "Proletarian Culture in America" (The Plebs, February 1923, pp 111-113)

<sup>3</sup> Maurer, 2nd N C W E, p 108



welfare of the masses, and . . . of college students as strike-breakers. The college-bred labour-haters who have assumed the 'patriotic' duty of helping to break railroad and street car strikes are 'products that American colleges like to boast of.' President Eliot once said, 'such scabs are heroes of the first order.' But insults by the 'educated' come closer home than this. The working men's children return from school with accounts of indictments of the labour movement made by their teachers. . . . Children have been led to feel that their own fathers, as active unionists, have been made the dupes of treasonable conspirators. . . . Working men have also observed the snobbishness of the average school teacher. If she shows any sympathy for working men and their families it is the condescending sympathy that is worse than contempt. Her male colleagues, up in the high school . . . are even worse snobs than she, for they are trying to hobnob with members of the chambers of commerce, rotary clubs, and similar organizations."

Mr. Maurer recalls also "the persecution of the few teachers who have had the intelligence and the red blood to dare to organize." School authorities are afraid to discuss social questions. "It is all right for the employers' point of view to be presented fully and continually. The high school rostrum is a favourite place for that; but there is no real freedom of discussion for the opposite side. . . . Everywhere educators are taking more pains to define and explain the limits of freedom of thought and discussion than they do to defend traditional academic freedom. . . .

"From all parts of the country come hundreds of authentic reports of restrictions put upon professors and teachers who would discuss labour problems freely. But what else can we expect? The boards of education and the boards of trustees of the colleges and universities are composed almost entirely of influential business and professional men who have a deep-seated

fear and hatred of anything that can be construed as encouragement to the labour movement."<sup>1</sup>

It is generally recognized among working people that University professors are controlled by university authorities who are in turn controlled by trustees whose economic interests are diametrically opposed to those of the workers. "They feel that instructors cannot and will not give workers information which might be utilized by them . . . to weaken the power of those trustees." They are convinced that no one helps labour as much as labour itself.<sup>2</sup> They urge the W.E.B., therefore, to seek close co-operation only with the Rand School and similar institutions.

Acting on these convictions, the W.E.B. in 1923 refused to allow the Extension Division of the University of California to affiliate. Subsequently, however, a joint committee composed of University teachers and representatives of the State Federation of Labour, with the latter in the majority, was formed. And an annual legislative appropriation of \$10,000 was set aside for expenditure under an agreement which permitted the withdrawal of either party at any time. The committee employed as director of the work, a trade-unionist, who had previously worked under University direction, and the reorganized enterprise was granted W.E.B. affiliation.<sup>3</sup>

The relation of the A.F. of L. to the W.E.B. was also the subject of some disagreement. Prior to 1918 the interest of the Federation in Workers' Education had been somewhat half-hearted. After that date, however, an investigation of educational activities under union auspices was made, the main question at issue being the principle upon which such work was con-

<sup>1</sup> Maurer, James H., *Labour's Demands for its own Schools*, pp 276-278 The Nation (N.Y.), Sept 20, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Egbert of Columbia and Labour Economics. Justice, June 2, 1922

<sup>3</sup> Muste, A. J., *Workers' Education in the United States*, Nation, Oct. 1, 1924, pp 333-334.

ducted. The investigating committee paid tribute to the Ladies' Garment Workers, the Boston Central Labour Union, the Women's Trade Union League and other organizations for their energy and ambition in founding trade union schools and colleges. Nevertheless, it was evident that the committee was not in entire sympathy with the movement. It reverted to the old American Federation of Labour tradition of loyalty to the public school and announced the belief that the educational facilities for workers should be provided by the public educational authorities. "Classes under union auspices should be considered a stop-gap . . . the sound solution is a progressive board of education responsive to the public."

In 1920, however, when it was observed that the movement was too strong to be side-tracked, the Federation appeared to drop the tactic of opposition. The possibility of co-ordinating working-class education was discussed.<sup>1</sup> Finally in 1922, a plan was developed in conjunction with the W.E.B. whereby the American Federation of Labour accepted representation on the executive committee<sup>2</sup> of that organization and assumed partial responsibility for a thorough-going programme of adult workers' education. The only defect of the plan was that instead of providing an organization through which united educational work could be conducted, representation on the controlling committee of

<sup>1</sup> Pamphlet, *Education for All*, pp 19-21

<sup>2</sup> The Executive Committee of the W E B consists of *John Frey*, Editor, Moulders' Journal, International Moulders' Union; *Mathew Woll*, Vice-president of the American Federation of Labour, President, International Photo-Engravers' Union; *G. W. Perkins*, President, Cigar Makers' International Union, *J. H. Maurer*, President, Pennsylvania State Federation of Labour; *John Brophy*, President, District No. 2, United Mine Workers of America; *Harry Russell*, Vice-president, Massachusetts State Federation of Labour; *John Van Vaerennewyck*, Vice-president, Massachusetts State Federation of Labour, *Fannna M. Cohn*, Vice-president, I.L.G.W.U.; *Frieda Miller*, W.T.U.L.; *Spencer Miller, jr*, Secretary of the Committee (Labour Clarion, San Francisco, Dec 15, 1923, p. 4)

the W.E.B. was restricted to A.F. of L. unions in good standing or to the four transportation brotherhoods. The W.E.B. as a result became identified with the American Federation of Labour Education Committee appointed by Mr. Gompers,<sup>1</sup> and all socialist, secessionist, and university enterprises for Workers' Education over which the Federation could not exercise financial control were excluded from active membership and participation in management.

Of course, it is not necessary for a movement to have one centre, and one centre only, but Workers' Education in the United States will not have reached maturity until this and other obstacles to thorough-going correlation of work are removed.

<sup>1</sup> Railroad Worker, Aug. 1922, p. 15. See also "The Object of Workers' Education" (New Republic, April 25, 1923), pp 229-230, Norman Thomas' *Workers' Education* (New Republic, May 9, 1923), pp 296-297



## CHAPTER XIII

### CONCLUSION

"There is a class division in knowledge which goes deeper down than any other division and it is that division which is producing much of the unrest in the industrial world to-day."

LORD HALDANE.

#### I

THE history of the extension of knowledge has been written by educators and idealists. Formal education, to them, has either always existed, or originated in the unforced inclination of scholars to share their intellectual store with the ignorant and untutored. According to them it was planned and administered "to adjust every individual to the spiritual possessions of the race," "to assist him in realizing his own potentialities," "to carry forward that complex of ideas called civilization." Its aim was said to have been world-building, or the training of some capacity for productiveness, the development of character and the preparation of men for complete living.

But educational practice has not been moulded by pedagogues nor by those whose interests have dictated a wider diffusion of knowledge. The school is a social institution and has been created in the midst of social frictions. Forces other than the intellectual or humanitarian have had a hand in shaping it. Circumstances usually economic or political have put some men in authority over others. Those in power have endeavoured to maintain their position. A common corollary of belief in the value of education for ruling groups has been a disbelief in the possibility or expediency of

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encouraging a keen intellectual life among the lower orders. In fact, one of the most impressive intellectual phenomena of history is the protracted ignorance of the masses. Education has not been a free good. It has not been extended equally nor with open-handed generosity. Educational exclusion has played quite as large a part in the affairs of men as educational expansion. The initiative in education like that in the struggle for political freedom has proceeded from those who have needed it most. Democratic institutions owe their development not to the privileged and propertied but to the disenfranchised, and disinherited. The modern school owes its existence to the perpetual struggle of the unfree and untaught for a share in social control.<sup>1</sup>

The struggles of the inferior orders for knowledge prior to the nineteenth century were comparatively desultory and short-lived. The conflict of interest centring around the question of education took place within a limited area. What educational friction there was occurred between strongly entrenched intermediate groups such as the church and state, the middle classes and the church, the lesser feudal orders and the manorial lords. Each of these groups at one time or another wrested the privilege of learning from those just above and established schools for their young people. The curriculum in nearly every case was devised to meet some immediate condition of economic or political liberty. Once having secured a literate personnel, however, interest in the extension of learning was over. For the masses were numbed by poverty. They had no weapons to use against physical distress, much less

<sup>1</sup> "Adjustments however originated put some men in authority over others, and those in power have always endeavoured to maintain their position. The motion for new adjustments has proceeded from that part of the community which has been most conscious of some new phase of unequal incidence of social burdens or of an unequal restriction of social opportunity" (Teggart, F. J., *The Circumstance or the Substance of History*, American Historical Review, July 1910, pp. 709-719.)

against mental and spiritual starvation. Each newly book-learned group joined therefore with other ruling folk in consolidating their advantage and the universal governing class policy of educational restriction met for the time being with no more opposition. It was not until after the French Revolution and the mechanization of production that the poor began their day in school. As forms of government changed and migrations began from the old world to the new, they ceased to be passive and inarticulate. They became conscious of the unequal incidence of social burdens and the unequal restriction of social opportunity. They began to recognize the relationship between exploitation and ignorance; to organize and make demands. And among the first of the latter was the demand for knowledge.

According to the more conventional historians of the upper classes, especially in England, this desire of the poor to improve their intellectual condition was met with disinterested magnanimity and benevolence. A great deal was written concerning the unexampled efforts made by the middle classes and the rich to found schools and tempt the poor to learn their letters. The brightest minds in literature and science were said to have directed their talents to the extension of useful knowledge. Learned divine and ermined duke were not above presiding over the class-rooms of artisans and day labourers. Even in the United States where conditions were less acute and the feeling between classes softened by the early enfranchisement of the non-propertied the same attempts to appear more virtuous than human obscured the raw edges of educational contention.

Enough has been said, however, to cast reasonable doubt upon protestations of liberality and intellectual goodwill. The period was one of glib humanitarianism and standardized piety. It was also a time of industrial and political discontent and unrest. By a process of



rationalization familiar to modern psychologists the upper classes believed their educational activity to be determined by noble and high-minded motives. Nevertheless, the development of education for the poor in both English-speaking countries differed in no respect from the pattern set by earlier revivals of pedagogical zeal. Like the education of the inferior orders at earlier periods of history the education of the working class in the nineteenth century was adopted for the purpose of conserving the old political and economic institutions in their current form.

The development of machine production with its enslavement of the poor had proceeded so far and so fast that the majority of educated men had renounced the hope of adapting human life and human power to their new surroundings in such a way as to satisfy the noble instincts of human character. They were content to think of the mass of their fellow-countrymen as concerned only with the routine of working, eating, and sleeping.<sup>1</sup> They seemed bent furthermore on withholding from their dependents all initiative in politics, industry, education, pleasure, and social life. The ruling classes not only doubted the capacity of the masses to learn, but they feared the results of over-instruction as well. Consequently, although leadership in education in the course of the century shifted from church to gentry, from gentry to manufacturer, from manufacturer to politician, from politician to philanthropist, the mainspring of upper-class educational endeavour remained the same. In the education of the poor to prevent political disturbance, education of artisans to increase profits, education of working-class voters to ensure civic responsibility, as defined by the school of Manchester, education by churchmen to popularize the church, education by the Universities to disseminate "knowledge," education by free schools to equalize political opportunity, an appeal to apprehen-

<sup>1</sup> Hammond, *The Skilled Labourer*, p. 6.

sion or acquisitiveness always brought more support than a proposal "to adjust men to the spiritual possessions of the race," or "to carry forward that complex of ideas called civilization. The upper classes, whatever their immediate affiliations, preferred to direct education into safe channels, to keep out dangerous influences, to chill enthusiasm, to insert motives and to create atmospheres beneficial to the master class.<sup>1</sup>

To determine what the young working class wanted of education and how, in the face of such obstacles, it set about the task of getting it, is attended with great difficulty. For trade unions before and after 1825 were thrust underground by persecution. Their meetings were conducted in secret. Minutes were seldom kept. The few ill-spelled, blotted and crossed out records which have come down to us are mute evidences of the embarrassment under which working-class officials laboured in conducting the elementary duties of their offices.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, enough is known to show that Hannah More, Adam Smith, Dr. Johnson, and American opponents to educational equality were wrong. The poor not only possessed mental capacity, but they exercised mental initiative. This initiative was expressed in both a negative and positive manner. The poor at first attended Adult Schools, Mechanics' Institutes, Working Men's Colleges, University Extension Classes, and other enterprises of the upper classes, in great numbers. Then when curriculum and administration failed to meet their working-class intellectual needs they withdrew their attendance, and organized systems of instruction for themselves, which paralleled and overlapped upon the efforts of their betters, but embodied what the poor as a class thought education for workers should contain.

<sup>1</sup> Hobson J A, *W.E A. Year Book*, 1918, p 54.

<sup>2</sup> "The Plebs," Vol. XIV, Nos 6 and 7 (June and July 1900), reprints several pages from an old ledger kept by a group of engineers about 1831. It is valuable as an illustration of the cultural level of the working class of the period.

The significance of the decline of the Adult School and kindred enterprises together with the rise of the Mutual Improvement Societies, the public school and later attempts at self-education lies in the fact that their success was not determined by the support of educated members of the community, but by variations in the demand of more or less illiterate men. The educational measures formulated by the upper classes for the purpose of economic and political self-preservation miscarried. The educational agencies to which they looked for relief from impending economic and political change or assistance in increasing the profitability of industry failed. For the poor, sensing the connection between knowledge and the solution of the problem of poverty, resisted dictation concerning the kind of information with which they were to stock their minds and embarked upon counter educational enterprises of their own. Unlike the middle class, which regarded education as an interesting intellectual game to which variety always lent piquant attraction, the workers looked upon their mental competence or incompetence as a bread and butter matter. Ultimately, therefore, they detected attempts to divert their minds from a definite educational goal. The past of Workers' Education has been devoted to the insistence on the part of the workers that working men should be educated to meet the conditions of working-class life as they themselves saw it. Labour like other subject classes throughout the past has demanded and provided an education designed to increase its desire and capacity to share in social control.

## II

Workers' Education is the twentieth century expression of the world-old struggle of the inferior economic orders for knowledge and power. It has a past of great antiquity and dignity. In the contemporary world of

education and labour it is a movement of significance and promise. But no greater mistake can be made than to overestimate the stability of the small enterprises which constitute its present phase, or to ignore the need for clear and continuous thinking. Problems of survival confront it on every side. Critics, friendly and hostile, ask searching questions. Is such a movement needed now? If needed, what must it do to succeed? If successful, what will it mean to society? The future of the movement and of the working class rests in a large measure upon the willingness of labour to face these questions thoughtfully and to answer them with candour.

Doubt concerning the necessity or expediency of Workers' Education, in a modern state where elementary intellectual discipline is theoretically available to every man, has been recently expressed by the representatives of at least three groups, notably learning, business, and labour. The misgivings of professors, teachers, and administrators of conventional educational institutions are expressed in many forms varying from timid sympathy to open hostility. The more friendly pedagogues are worried over the relative independence shown by many units of the new movement toward organized educational endeavour in the public schools and universities. They hold the Universities to be the trusted centres of advanced learning; the free school, the handiwork of previous generations and of working men. They point to the wastefulness of maintaining parallel educational systems and plants. Why, in the interests of economy,<sup>1</sup> permanence, and power, they ask, should not two branches of the same movement merge or co-operate? Another more uninformed group of college and grade school teachers regard Workers' Education as a new form of vocational training and fashion their advice and activity in accordance with

<sup>1</sup> Feis, Herbert, *The Workers' Educational Movement in the United States*, pp. 144-147, School and Society, Sept 10, 1921.

that misconception. Courses in blue-print reading and machine shop practice are referred to as part of the new movement. Still others see in it an opportunity to instruct the masses in intelligent consumption.<sup>1</sup> The most widely diffused academic anxiety is produced, however, neither by a fear of wasted effort or a desire to remodel working-class canons of expenditure. Few professors can discuss the subject of Workers' Education without uttering a warning against propaganda.

The attitude of business toward the extension of knowledge to the working classes has changed very little in the century or more since Robert Owen bade his fellow-manufacturers have an eye to their animate as well as inanimate machines. In the House of Commons the same arguments were heard against educational reform in 1918 as in 1818. Speaking to the Fisher Education Bill one member opposed the part time instruction of young people on the ground that it would be a menace to agricultural development. "How are the horses to be kept at work," he asked, "the cows to be milked, the sheep to be tended, and the folds to be pitched? How is education going to assist a man who has to spread manure on a field?" The Federation of British Industries claimed that such a law would be fatal to the building trades. "You will produce not what you want most, a divine discontent, but a discontent likely to be disastrous." In every industry the proposal was viewed with great alarm and the chief danger encountered by the Bill was the secret opposition of a powerful group who were determined to retain child labour for the industries in which they were interested.<sup>2</sup> In the United States the railroad administration is equally alive to the implied threat to private ownership involved in any plan for Workers' Education. The Railway Review traces the foundation of the Workers'

<sup>1</sup> Curoe, P. R. V., *A Real Opportunity for the College*, pp. 420-425. Educational Review, Dec 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Hansard, 1918, Vol CIV, pp 344, 349, 350, 353, 433, 442.

Education Bureau to revolutionary industrial unions at serious issue with the American Federation of Labour.<sup>1</sup> In a report rendered in 1921 to the New York Legislature, the Lusk Committee classified various trade union enterprises for adult education as seditious and un-American.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the educational interests of business and the educational interests of labour are still in collision. Though the focus of power has shifted from time to time, the attitude of authority has remained unchanged. Business men are in favour of educating working men as better machine operators and more effective producers. Further than that, they are unwilling to go and warn their governments "to avoid creating, as was done in India, a large class of persons whose education is unsuitable for the employment they eventually enter."<sup>3</sup>

The workers themselves are by no means unanimously in favour of the trade union assumption of the educational function. The working man's first objection is similar to that of the average citizen who asks why the working class should create another system of education duplicating that of the free school. His second is that of the loyal trade unionist who regards his union as the working-class equivalent of upper-class schools and colleges. He realizes that the tasks the unions have set themselves require constant reformulation of aim and policy, the consideration of questions extending far beyond the boundaries of local union affairs. But he cannot always understand why the trade union, that laboratory of majority rule, representative government, use of the ballot, taxation by will

<sup>1</sup> "The Mis-Education of R R. Employees and Industrial Workers," *Railway Review*, March 3, 1923, pp. 375-379; "A New Kind of Propaganda against the Railroads," *Railway Review*, March 31, 1923, pp. 586-591.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Joint Legislative Committee Investigating Seditious Activities. *Revolutionary Radicalism: Its History, Purpose, and Tactics*. (Albany, Lyon, 1920.)

<sup>3</sup> Pamphlet, *The Choice before the Nation*, London W E A., p. 7.

of the membership, and all other elementary principles of democracy, which formerly trained working men for their activities in the labour movement, should be supplemented by a newer and more rigid system of instruction.

Of course a complete answer to all the objections to Workers' Education or an explanation of why the public school, university, and trade union can not, at present, be expected to meet all the mental needs of the working class, is impossible at this time. It would require a tedious rehearsal of the history of education and of labour. A few points, however, can be made in reasonable space. As a preliminary step in settling the question of the necessity of Workers' Education, definition is necessary. What kind of knowledge is wanted by the workers, why can they not obtain it from conventional sources of information?

In the early days when Wesley and his colleagues opened their Adult Schools, the intellectual goal of the poor was the power to read the Bible and pen a signature. A little later the preoccupation of factory owners and managers in the wonders of scientific discovery, began to extend also to the workers and efforts were made by several agencies to educate inventors and machine operatives. In the thirties in the United States and the seventies in Great Britain, when suffrage and elementary education were almost simultaneously granted to the working classes, the word education still conveyed its original meaning. The ability to read and write remained the standard test of civic competence, and the voter who could spell out a newspaper was considered equipped to use the ballot.

But since these early days the educational problem of the working class as seen by the worker himself, has changed. It is no longer necessary for him to ask for the vote nor for training enough to use it. He no longer looks to science to lift him out of his industrial dilemma. He needs training in the technique of pro-

duction and industrial administration. In England the right of trade unions, as parts of the social and industrial system to use their power, influence, and prestige to effect a revolution in a constitutional way, is affirmed. Similarly in the United States, the necessity of effecting best social changes by consent is recognized. What the worker now wants to know is how to organize and direct his unions; how to secure and maintain participation in industrial management. For this, literacy or a sixth grade education is not enough. He requires a working body of social and economic facts. He needs not only to sense and secure the fullness and beauty of life, but also to find himself in a complex world.

The public school and universities have two things to offer the working-class student in his attempt to secure this new body of knowledge, namely, physical equipment and teaching personnel. In many instances, (although the exceptions are significant), the physical equipment has been offered and accepted. Workers' classes often meet on school and university premises. To obtain the intellectual and spiritual co-operation of faculties, however, is another matter. For the professional educator (again with certain exceptions) maintains a doctrinaire attitude toward newcomers in the field of instruction and the idea of admitting working-class students or trade union officials into the councils of teachers and administrators is yet to be popular. A method of joint university and trade union control has, of course been effected in England under the Tutorial Class System and also in one or two American college communities. But there is a tendency, even where free and equal partnership has been realized, for the university to seek to increase its influence and elbow out labour bodies which have done the pioneering work.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, employers' interests dominate the control

<sup>1</sup> Cole, G. D. H., *Workers' Education - Achievements, Needs, Prospects*, The Highway, May 1923, p 114



of colleges and schools. Labour may have representation on committees for Workers' Education, but it is always in the minority or more often wholly unrepresented on the administrative boards of the older enterprises.

It is unreasonable under such circumstances to expect the teachers in the lower and higher schools to understand or admit the special educational needs of the workers as a class. The nearest approach to such an understanding has occurred in vocational education with well recognized results. Here the recognition of the special educational needs of the workers as an economic class is so complete that the curriculum fails to consider the possibility of removal from that class. According to current theories, educators assume that the rank and file will not take part in management and that the boy who learns a trade is so fortunate that there is no use in preparing him for the higher managerial and technical positions. Education in the processes and costs of production and marketing, the formulation of the labour policy, and the organization of the financial system are therefore neglected in the lower schools to which the young working man or woman has access. The public schools fail to comprehend the lines of promotion in industrial life and to prepare each child to go up the line. They fail to grasp the idea that true education means first training to earn a living ; second, preparation for promotion ; finally, and more important, instruction in the possibilities and methods of participation of all workers in the management and forming of financial policies of the industries in which they work.<sup>1</sup> Vocational education is not Workers' Education.

The teachers' fear of propaganda disguised as academic instruction, of course, has some foundation. Several facts, however, should be weighed by the anti-

<sup>1</sup> Commons, J. R., *Industrial Government* (New York, Macmillan, 1921), Ch. XXIII ; *Joint Control*, by Jennie McMullin Turner, pp. 412-418.

propagandist before his condemnation of Workers' Education on that charge is accepted as conclusive. One of these is that propaganda does not always emanate from the destructive members of society. Much modern educational effort derives its inspiration from religious and political instruction offered to bolster up an earlier existing order. The grade schools and colleges are not above preaching nationalism, imperialism, or americanism. Although, according to the scientist, it would be absurd to write a text on chemistry from a tariff reformer's standpoint or on biology from the point of view of a free-trader, even the scientist should remember that the theory of evolution had its proponents and pamphleteers in the seventies and eighties just as the Book of Genesis has its William J. Bryan to-day. Indeed, education has only gradually, if ever, effected a slight detachment from the conviction that it should carry on religious, political and scientific indoctrination. In Workers' Education of less radical affiliations there is possibly less need for doctrinal instruction than is generally believed. For as one American trade union educator has said, "our members have been educated in the school of bitter experience. They have taken part in the struggles of their Union. Can we make the need for social change any more convincing by class propaganda than by the lesson of a winter of unemployment? Do we have to prove that there is exploitation of labour to those who have graduated from the sweatshop? Must we preach the class struggle to those who have faced the lockout? They have learned from bitter experience that the existing economic system is unsatisfactory and should be improved and changed."<sup>1</sup> Propaganda has been indicted as "an attempt to bring others to one's own point of view." Education has been defined as

<sup>1</sup> Our Educational Policy. Report submitted to the W.E.B. by the I.L.G.W.U. (Justice, June 15, 1923, p. 10) See also Cole, G. D. H., *W E A. Education Year Book*, 1918, p. 372

an "effort to equip people with the means of making up their own minds."<sup>1</sup> It seems wise for pedagogical critics of Workers' Education to remember that both are legitimate activities. The only point is, they are different. When an enterprise for conventional or working-class education advocates the triumph or downfall of the capitalist system without training the workers to become efficient directing and serving members of the old or new order, its instruction should be considered primarily propaganda. When, however, the teaching turns to subject matter which educates men and women in the actual problems, character, relationships, and functions of industry, it should be accepted as education,<sup>2</sup> whether students are sons of managers or operatives. Teachers should remember, furthermore, that the question of propaganda in Workers' Education or any other education is the other side of the question of academic freedom. Nothing can be gained by denying the place and necessity of the propagandist. For education cannot help being propaganda, even though it be propaganda of a negative sort which insists that definite opinions on any subject are undesirable and probably crude.<sup>3</sup>

If the public school with its elaborate cultural and vocational departments is ill-adapted to free labour from its economic fetters; if the universities are hampered by timidity, conventionality, and the economic interests of boards of governors, from a clean-cut analysis of their relationship to labour's intellectual needs; if many of the powers-that-be in the labour movement itself are afraid to educate their followers; the necessity for trade unions to assume the educational function is obvious. For business is fully alive to the potentialities of an

<sup>1</sup> Cole, G. D. H., *W.E.A. Year Book*, 1918.

<sup>2</sup> Tannenbaum, Frank, *The Labour Movement: Its Conservative Functions and Social Consequences*, pp. 236-248. (New York, Putnam, 1921.)

<sup>3</sup> Pamphlet, *What Does Education Mean to the Workers?* p. 8.

educated labour movement. Its activity usually takes the form of opposition to educational reform. But where open antagonism to Workers' Education, or other liberal educational movements seem unwise, another more subtle tactic is employed. Veiled employers' organizations in Great Britain, such as the Scottish Economic League, Economic Study Clubs, and others are now offering non-partisan study classes in economics for workers. Their ostensible object is to furnish an adequate and effective antidote to the poison of revolutionary doctrine, or to teach men to study and think for themselves.

The work of these groups has received the cordial co-operation of the Federation of British Industries, the Engineering Employers' Federation, the National Union of Manufacturers, the British Empire Producers' Association. The educational director of the National Alliance of Employers and Employed states that that organization "does not provide education for education's sake." It chooses subjects that "have a direct relation to industrial conditions." It runs classes in elocution and provides training "for a specific object, the object being to train a great number of working trade unionists—preferably those holding minor positions in the unions, who may, in the lapse of years, lead their national movement. . . . Such men have a distinct advantage as class leaders over the normal educationalists or the paid propagandist, inasmuch as, though on the whole they may be less educated and certainly less polished in style . . . a great mass of the working men with whom they are brought in contact will 'take things from them' that they would take from no other type because they are one of themselves."<sup>1</sup>

To some critics the policy of class neutrality adopted by the W.E.A. as a means of obtaining financial support is cited as a part of the same manufacturers' move-

<sup>1</sup> Millar, J. P. M., *The W.E.A. Spider and the T. U. C. Fly*, Plebs, Aug. 1922, pp. 246-255.

ment. In letters soliciting subscriptions the creation of a "spirit of fellowship between different classes" is referred to as no small part of the result aimed at by the organization.<sup>1</sup> In a South Wales newspaper employers of labour suggest that the W.E.A. receive the strongest support, "if for no other reason than that it provides an antidote and corrective to the mischievous propaganda of various sorts of revolutionists in our midst."<sup>2</sup> In the United States, vestibule training is used by employers for a similar purpose. The managing director of the National Association of Corporation Schools claims that training conducted on the premises of industrial plants decreases the chances of an invasion of Bolshevik doctrines by about ninety per cent. The same man ascribed the failure of the steel strike to the educational programme of the United States Steel Corporation.<sup>3</sup> Moved by similar purposes, many large factories maintain industrial universities. That of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company in Akron, Ohio, with a faculty of 117 teachers and 5700 students instructed free of charge, is typical.<sup>4</sup>

Is Workers' Education under workers' control necessary at the present time? Judged by its critics and competitors, it is.

### III

The working class has shown that it wants education. Its educational initiative has exhibited sufficient continuity and power of self-renewal to entitle it to be regarded as a permanent characteristic of the class. In an environment somewhat hostile to such experimenta-

<sup>1</sup> Plebs, July 1922, p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> Millar, *op cit*, p. 250. See also Hunter, E. E., *National Propaganda*, Socialist Review, Mar. 1922.

<sup>3</sup> Revolutionary Radicalism in history, purpose, and tactics. Being the report of the joint legislative committee investigating seditious activities, Part II, Vol II, p 3080. (Albany, Lyon, 1920.)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2172.

tion, it has demonstrated a capacity for creating its own administrative forms and in many cases providing its own teachers. Nevertheless, experiments fail now and then, illusions are shattered, and precious time is wasted in following blind leads. It is important to know what must be done to ensure the success of the movement ; what, in fact, success in Workers' Education means.

The ambition of some leaders in the movement naturally takes a numerical or materialist direction. The education of the masses for mass activity seems to them to be the obvious next step. The sooner an enormous volume of attendance is secured, say they, the sooner the job of reconstructing the social order can begin. This attitude is expressed by many labour educators in America, where success in any undertaking implies bigness and where labour as well as capital is dominated by the American preference for quantitative rather than qualitative judgments. One observer has remarked that the American working class has the moving-picture mind and loves novelty, mass meetings, and headlines. Loosely formed workers' classes are called Colleges and Universities and disappointment is expressed when attendance increases only thirty per cent. in one year.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, a numerical standard of success has certain well-defined advantages over other less definite means of appraisement. It indicates at a glance the presence or absence in a movement of the conditions productive of growth. In spite of universally small beginnings, Workers' Education in England and the United States has always expanded whenever the wishes of students have not been too flagrantly violated. This was true of the Adult School and Mechanics' Institute. It was equally true of the tutorial class system. When the

<sup>1</sup> Gleason, Arthur, *Workers' Education*, New Republic, April 10, 1921, pp. 235-237 ; March 23, 1923, p 143. See also Miller, Freda, " Philadelphia Trade Union College," 2nd N.C.W.E., pp. 34-37.

latter movement was inaugurated in 1907, 78 students attended 2 classes. Ten years later students had increased to, 3,300 and classes to 153.<sup>1</sup> The latter figure, of course, does not represent the total number of working people in classes for Workers' Education in England. Excluding from enrolment those attending in Settlement house classes and other less formal educational agencies, that sum approaches at least 79,000.<sup>2</sup> In the United States, Trade Union Colleges, Workers' Universities and the like have had similar experiences. From a mere handful here and there, has grown up in four or five short years an army of working-class students. The total attendance claimed in 1924 was 25,000. The only old agency for Workers' Education in the United States which has failed to grow is the Training School for Organizers of the National Women's Trade Union League.

A numerical standard of success is simple, concrete, and in harmony with the business man's bias in favour of results expressed in debits and credits. It is also a familiar concept to trade unionists whose economic power is in direct proportion to the size of their unions.

Statistical valuation, however, has disadvantages, when applied to intellectual movements, in general, and to Workers' Education, in particular. It assumes in the first place the possibility of an almost unlimited extension of attendance. Enthusiastic supporters of this basis of measurement have no doubt that every working man will some time take his book in hand. In the second place, it substitutes a standard of size for

<sup>1</sup> A.E.C., p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> The annual attendance in Tutorial Classes was 3300, Adult Schools, 47,977; Working Men's College, 1436, Vaughan Memorial College, 1870; London College for Working Women, 223; Morley College, 1125, Ruskin College, 46; London Labour College, 14; Provincial Plebs League Classes, 1000, Scottish Labour College, 1500; Co-operative Society Classes, 21,953. These figures were assembled from the Final Report of the Adult Education Committee to the Ministry of Reconstruction. They were collected at times in the period from 1912-1918. (A.E.C., pp. 191, 212, 218, 219, 224, 237.)

one of content. As a matter of fact, conditions both within and without the labour movement impose severe limits upon the number of working men who can be expected to enroll, and cast doubt upon the soundness of appraisement in material terms alone.

The possibility of enrolling all trade unionists in the class-room is somewhat remote. Enterprises for Workers' Education contain but a small proportion of the total number of organized workers in each community. In England, in 1920, for example, 8,000,000 men and women were members of trade unions, or one to every seven and one-half of the population.<sup>1</sup> In the United States in the same year 4,078,740, or one in every thirty-one persons were organized.<sup>2</sup> Accepting as correct figures cited for the total enrollment in each country, the opportunity to obtain an education designed to train members of the working class for their function in the labour movement has to date therefore attracted less than one per cent. of the organized men and women in both England and the United States. The proportion of all workers interested in Workers' Education is, of course, negligible. Were it possible at one stroke to enroll every British and American trade union man and woman in some enterprise for Workers' Education, millions of working people in England and the United States would still go untaught.

Furthermore, though one of the main objectives of Workers' Education is the training of leadership and the increase of efficiency among trade union officials, it is vain to expect every trade union president, secretary, and business agent in either England or the United States to turn to his books at one and the same time.

<sup>1</sup> *Adult Education and the Trade Unionist*, p. 4. See also Review of Foster, W. Z., "The Bankruptcy of the American Labour Movement," *Labour Monthly*, May 1923, pp. 318-319.

<sup>2</sup> Exclusive of 177,000 members of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and 453,000 members of the Railroad Brotherhood (Carroll, *op. cit.*, pp. XI-XII). See also Foster, *op. cit.*



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It is also difficult to state with any accuracy the percentage of trade union officers enrolled in classes at the present time. Scattered British and American statements indicate that they are rather numerous. Many of the keenest W.E.A. workers are prominently identified with the trade union, co-operative and political labour movements. Yet, the proportion of officers attending is not necessarily high. It is far easier to estimate the number which might be expected to attend were enrollment compulsory upon all officials. Counting a minimum of three officials to each local, national, city central and state federation in the United States there would be over 100,000 students in Workers' Classes.<sup>1</sup> In England there would be no less.<sup>2</sup> Evidently that goal has not yet been reached. For the working class, like other social groups, with more opportunity for study and reflection, is not wholly converted to the need of training its members for public service. Considering their economic and political handicaps, the proportion of trade union members interested in the profession of trade union administration is probably no lower than the proportion of other classes seeking entrance to law, medicine, or the church.

Success in Workers' Education, if it is to be measured numerically must, therefore, be re-defined and its natural limits understood. Small trade union membership and official lack of interest in education are not the only barriers to a large enrolment in workers' classes. The age of trade unionists has some influence upon the eagerness with which they embrace an opportunity to study. According to the American experience the young people set the pace. Educational work in the needle-trades is a movement of men and

<sup>1</sup> Locals, 36,741, national unions, 110, city central, 926; state federations, 46; total, 37,823 organizations. (Carroll, *op cit*, pp. XI-XIII.)

<sup>2</sup> The Webbs estimate that labour's driving force rests in 50,000 local branches . . . and 100,000 branch officials and shop stewards. (Gleason, Arthur, *Workers' Education*, New Republic, April 20, 1922, p. 236.)

women under forty years of age.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the expansion and contraction of Workers' Education, which is an economic phenomenon is often determined by forces in the economic environment beyond working-class control.

Trade unions like business enterprises do not formulate their programmes in advance. They are opportunistic organizations reacting to the fluctuating level of prices. When prices are high, membership increases, labour is in demand, strikes are won, and the philosophy of business unionism with its emphasis upon higher wages and shorter hours here and now, dominates the movement. At such times the temporizing methods of education are unattractive. When, on the other hand, a depression sets in and trade unions face the possibility of extinction, strikes begin to be lost, and a different tactic is developed. Schemes for self-employment, co-operation and political action are put forward. Revolutionary or uplift unionism has its day and the working-class movement adopts compensatory humanitarian and idealistic projects.

The concurrence of economic distress in England with the rise of the Adult Schools and the Mechanics' Institute is too obvious to be pressed. The first Trade Union experiments in education were made during the downward movement of Chartism. The same relationship existed between the industrial depression of 1828 in the United States and the founding of the public school. (The panic of 1837 which proved to be so crushing a blow to American labour forced working men to put their final hope in education.) Organized associations voted to improve their "moral and intellectual condition."<sup>2</sup> The establishment of the W.E.A. and the Labour College followed hard on the heels of an industrial ebb, while the recent educational revival in the Trade Union Congress and the American

<sup>1</sup> Advance, April 8, 1921, p. 7; Justice, Nov. 19, 1920, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Commons, J. R., *History of Labour*, pp. 456, 469.

Federation of Labour is closely associated with the slack season of 1921 and 1922. Of course, the clearest illustration of the influence of social depression upon the intellectual aspirations of the working class is provided by a small but vocal group of workers who advocate Workers' Education in order to create a proletarian culture.

Their most lucid spokesmen are certain French syndicalists, the Plebs League, and the present Commissar of Education in Russia. According to the latter, man from his infancy begins to be covered with the writings of life. But the forces which play a part in his intellectual economy are not all of the same strength. The ultimate content and arrangement of his system of ideas, is determined by the social organization in which he lives, and the means by which he is called upon to satisfy the emotions of hunger and love. He is consciously or unconsciously dominated by his primary interests and by the primary interests of his group. His idea of the world and of God, of justice and morality, of society and the laws of its existence, of economics and of politics are nourished in group soil.

Cultures are customarily classified according to nations, geographical units or periods. There is the culture of China and Europe. There is also the culture of feudalism and the renaissance. (Capitalism, however, is international.) The constellation of ideas which sanctions the present distribution of wealth, privilege, and power crosses the boundaries of states. The battle-line is drawn between economic rather than national groups. A struggle for dominance has begun between the culture of the owners of the industrial process and the culture of its operators.

Like all subject groups the working class, growing in numbers and influence, has begun to organize its system of ideas. "The workers have already begun to forge a culture of their own in the gloomy basement of the palace." The culture of the fighting proletariat is

based on Marx. This includes a method for the investigation of social phenomena, and for practical educational organization.

The leaders in the transitional phase are of the Hebraic type, ascetics and puritans. Serious-minded, they take no pleasure in the "toys" of Art, and will waste no time obtaining knowledge which does not bear directly upon the facts of life. They conceive of the future in severe, practical terms. They believe that the realization of working-class ideas of Truth and Beauty in the form of Art should wait upon the satisfactory culmination of the economic conflict. However, no Marxian questions the inevitability of something more universal than a fighting culture, which will abolish class divisions. This culture will be a product of the Hellenic type of man, who expects socialism to lead to an outburst of joy and express itself in a glorious paganism. Science and art will then be interwoven with technology and labour. The proletarian will dissolve the individual and the mortal in the collective and the immortal.<sup>1</sup>

In each one of these educational revivals there were signs of revolt against oppression. They accompanied working-class activity in which temporary measures were abandoned for fundamental; defensive tactics for militant adoption of programmes for social reconstruction and spiritual regeneration. A numerical standard of success with all of its arithmetical simplicity and concreteness falls short in the presence of such anticipations. These are things which cannot be valued on a quantity basis. The achievement of a purely working-class culture, if possible and desirable, is probably on the farther side of some distant horizon. As time goes

<sup>1</sup> Lunacharsky, A. V., *Proletarian Culture*, Survey, Mar. 1, 1923, pp. 691-693; *Working-class Culture*, The Plebs, Oct. 1920, pp. 157-162; Nov 1920, pp 189-192. Leaflet, *Self-Education of the Workers*, London, Workers' Socialist Federation. See also Paul, *op cit*, *passim*.; Cole, G. D. H., *Labour in the Commonwealth*, *passim*.

on the precise content of that millennium will probably be altered again and again. The point is that education in its best sense is always utopian. In a world of perpetual incompleteness, difficulty and obstruction it postulates the possibility of human perfectibility, ease, and happiness. When not concerned with the formal institutional aspects of teaching, it sets out to train men not only to enter a reconstituted community but to be its creator as well. The educator who does not dream dreams and see visions of a new society is not worthy of the name.

The working-class movement is not wanting in materialistic and utilitarian moods. It has often been self-seeking and self-regarding. The working man like the capitalist is a creature of the market place and factory. The influences playing upon him from day to day and year to year, are those fostered by the price system and machine industry. The mechanization which begins with the ring of the alarm clock, continues in the simple motions of the operative, and extends even to the hours of standardized leisure and recreation, competes with opportunities to initiate and nurture the elements of a larger life. To be educated by the machine is to be crippled for an appreciation of the higher life. The price system has a tendency to translate the good life into the "goods" life.<sup>1</sup>

Those who seek other than a numerical standard of success for Workers' Education do not indict, as unworthy of working-class energy, efforts to raise wages, shorten hours, or obtain participation in industrial management. They agree that Workers' Education must be technical and vocational in the sense that the worker must be trained for the administration of trade unions, the effective conduct of class protests and for the

<sup>1</sup> Mumford, Lewis, *Re-educating the Worker*, Survey, Jan. 7, 1922, pp. 7567-9.

duty of part ownership and operation of the industrial process. But they recall the fate which pursued the educational adventures of other economic groups at an earlier date. The Adult School, Mechanics' Institute, and other enterprises founded to extend and conserve class advantage, decayed through the narrow social vision and the self-regarding motives of their founders. A more thoughtful wing of the labour movement bears in mind the working man's common humanity. They see for Workers' Education the possibility of a similar nemesis. To them the future of the working class and its educational movement hangs on the answer given to one question. Will the workers recognize that the conjunction of education and labour does not automatically confer social benefit; that power sometimes delays the progress of the spirit?

In order to achieve success in Workers' Education and to know when success is achieved it will be necessary for the working class to read between the lines of statistical reports for more substantial evidence of social and educational vigour. For the stability of a movement is not to be reckoned wholly by its power to attract new adherents. Expansion is but one sign of health. Education, in general, exists to develop power to understand, modify, transform, and enrich human life. Workers' Education can stand on ground no higher. While admitting that the acquisitive motive can never be eliminated until industry is made skilful, intelligible, interesting, and light; while maintaining a rigid and realistic attitude toward economic facts and the essential demands of class emancipation; the intellectual and spiritual standard of success prescribes that everything which education and environment can do to moderate the lust for personal and class aggrandizement should be done. It insists that while friction is unavoidable, conflict should be tolerated only as an intermediate step toward conciliation. It advocates the formulation by Workers' Education of a concept of

human relationship for the time when conflict will be over. Success in Workers' Education depends, in other words, upon whether the working class chooses to secure wealth or responsibility, material goods or spiritual maturity.

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*W.A.A.E.* (World Association for Adult Education),  
*W.E.A.* (Workers' Educational Association);  
*W.E.B.* (Workers' Education Bureau),  
*N.C.W.E.* (National Conference on Workers' Education);  
*A.F. of L.* (American Federation of Labour),  
*N.W.T.U.L.* (National Women's Trade Union League).

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